Detention Camps in Asia

The Conditions of Confinement in Modern Asian History

Edited by

Robert Cribb,

Christina Twomey

& Sandra Wilson

BRILL

SOCIAL SCIENCES IN ASIA 41

THE
AUSTRALIAN
NATIONAL
UNIVERSITY

Detention Camps in Asia

Social Sciences in Asia

Edited by

Kelvin Low (*National University of Singapore*)
Thomas Stodulka (*Freie Universität Berlin*)
Maunaguru Sidharthan (*National University of Singapore*)

VOLUME 41

The titles published in this series are listed at *brill.com/ssa*

Detention Camps in Asia

The Conditions of Confinement in Modern Asian History

Edited by

Robert Cribb, Christina Twomey, and Sandra Wilson

BRILL

LEIDEN | BOSTON

Cover illustration: Reeducation camp, the name given to the post-war concentration camps operated by the Vietnamese government.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Cribb, Robert, editor. | Twomey, Christina, editor. | Wilson, Sandra, 1957– editor.
Title: Detention camps in Asia : the conditions of confinement in modern Asian history / edited by Robert Cribb, Christina Twomey, and Sandra Wilson.
Description: Leiden ; Boston : Brill, 2022. | Series: Social sciences in Asia, 1567–2794 ; volume 41 | Includes bibliographical references.
Identifiers: LCCN 2022016094 (print) | LCCN 2022016095 (ebook) | ISBN 9789004471726 (hardback ; alk. paper) | ISBN 9789004512573 (ebook)
Subjects: LCSH: Detention of persons—Asia—History. | Imprisonment—Asia—History. | Internal security—Asia—History.
Classification: LCC HV9776 .D48 2022 (print) | LCC HV9776 (ebook) | DDC 364.6095—dc23/eng/20220408
LC record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2022016094
LC ebook record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2022016095

Typeface for the Latin, Greek, and Cyrillic scripts: "Brill". See and download: brill.com/brill-typeface.

ISSN 1567-2794
ISBN 978-90-04-47172-6 (hardback)
ISBN 978-90-04-51257-3 (e-book)

Copyright 2022 by Robert Cribb, Christina Twomey, and Sandra Wilson. Published by Koninklijke Brill NV, Leiden, The Netherlands.
Koninklijke Brill NV incorporates the imprints Brill, Brill Nijhoff, Brill Hotei, Brill Schöningh, Brill Fink, Brill mentis, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Böhlau and V&R unipress.
All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, translated, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without prior written permission from the publisher. Requests for re-use and/or translations must be addressed to Koninklijke Brill NV via brill.com or copyright.com.

Brill has made all reasonable efforts to trace all rights holders to any copyrighted material used in this work. In cases where these efforts have not been successful the publisher welcomes communications from copyright holders, so that the appropriate acknowledgements can be made in future editions, and to settle other permission matters.

This book is printed on acid-free paper and produced in a sustainable manner.

Contents

List of Figures and Maps vii
Abbreviations viii
Notes on Contributors ix

1 Detention in Camps in Asia: An Overview 1
Robert Cribb

PART 1
Counterinsurgency

2 Reconcentration and the Camp System: The Legacy of the Philippine-American War 25
Christina Twomey

3 Detention in Malaya, 1948–1960: Spatial Segregation and Reintegration Techniques 43
Karl Hack

PART 2
Isolating Public Enemies

4 An Experiment with the Island Detention of Public Enemies in Postcolonial Burma 63
Nick Cheesman

5 Arbitrary Detention in Indonesia: Buru Prison Island, 1969–1979 82
Ken M.P. Setiawan

6 Displacement and Detention on Ataúro Island During the Indonesian Occupation of East Timor 100
Hannah Loney

PART 3
Torture and Re-Education

7 Detention Camps and the Order to Annihilate During the 1965–1966 Indonesian Genocide 119
Jess Melvin

8 Torture Camps in Indonesia, 1965–1970 137
Annie Pohlman

9 Vietnam's Re-Education Camps after 1975: Narratives of Detainees 156
Nathalie Huynh Chau Nguyen

10 China's Re-Education Camps in Xinjiang: Curing the Disease or Killing the Patient? 175
James Leibold

PART 4
Managing Camps

11 Detention Camps in the Japanese Empire, 1941–1945 199
Sandra Wilson

12 Tan Toey Prisoner of War Camp: The Dilemmas of Command 219
Paul Taucher

13 Captivity on the Home Front: Allied Prisoners of War in Fukuoka during the Second World War 237
Sarah Kovner

14 Gender and Politics in the **U.S.** Army's Detention of Female Prisoners of War during the Korean Conflict 254
Grace J. Chae

15 Seeking Refuge Amid Suffering in Indonesia's Galang Vietnamese Refugee Camp 274
Jemma Purdey

Index 299

Figures and Maps

Figures

7.1 'Detain/kill' detention sites and associated kill sites in Aceh 131
14.1 American propaganda leaflet, aimed at North Korean soldiers 260
14.2 Poster produced by American intelligence headquarters, aimed at U.S. soldiers 262
14.3 'Red POW Resistance on Kŏje Island was Crushed' 269
15.1 The baggage of arriving refugees was searched by Indonesian military authorities 284
15.2 Boat People Plaza, Galang Island 289
15.3 The noticeboards have not been maintained. Ngha Trang cemetery, Galang Island 290
15.4 Humanity Statue, Galang Island 291
15.5 Bodhi Tree, Galang Island 292

Maps

All maps produced by Robert Cribb.

2.1 The Philippines 28
3.1 Malaya 45
4.1 Cocos Islands, Burma 65
5.1 Buru Island, Indonesia 84
6.1 East Timor (Timor Leste) 101
7.1 Indonesia 121
8.1 Java and Bali 139
9.1 Re-education camps in Vietnam 159
10.1 People's Republic of China 177
10.2 Xinjiang 183
11.1 Selected Japanese prisoner-of-war camps: East Asia 206
11.2 Selected prisoner-of-war camps in Japan 211
12.1 Japanese prisoner-of-war camps: Ambon and Borneo 222
13.1 Fukuoka camps 240
14.1 Korea, 1950–1951 256
15.1 Galang Island, Indonesia 277

Abbreviations

ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
G30S	Gerakan 30 September (30 September Movement, Indonesia)
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
NCO	non-commissioned officer
NKPA	North Korean People's Army
P3V	Panitia Pengelolaan Pengungsi Vietnam (Management Committee for Refugees (Indonesia, 1979))
PKI	Partai Komunis Indonesia (Indonesian Communist Party)
POW	prisoner/s of war
RTL	re-education through labour (People's Republic of China)
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
XUAR	Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region

Notes on Contributors

Grace J. Chae
is an independent scholar who received her M.A. and Ph.D. in Modern Korean History from the University of Chicago. With the support of the Academy of Korean Studies collaborative project entitled "Beyond the Korean War," she is working on her book manuscript, *Captive Minds: Race, War, and the Education of Korean War POWs in U.S. Custody, 1950–1953*, which will be part of the Global Korea Book Series with the University of California Press.

Nick Cheesman
is a Senior Fellow in the Department of Political and Social Change, Australian National University, and author of *Opposing the Rule of Law: How Myanmar's Courts Make Law and Order* (Cambridge University Press, 2015), which received the Asian Law and Society Association's 2017 Distinguished Book Award. His ongoing research is on torture in Thailand and Myanmar. In his spare time he co-hosts the New Books in Southeast Asian Studies channel on the New Books Network.

Robert Cribb
is Professor of Asian History at the Australian National University. His research focusses on national identity, mass violence, historical geography and environmental politics, especially in Indonesia. He is author (with Sandra Wilson, Beatrice Trefalt and Dean Aszkielowicz) of *Japanese War Criminals: the Politics of Justice After the Second World War* (2017) and editor of *The Indonesian Killings of 1965–1966* (1990).

Karl Hack
is Professor of Asian and Imperial History at The Open University, UK, having previously taught at Singapore's Nanyang Technological University. He specialises in the history of the British Empire, decolonisation, Malaysia and Singapore, and insurgency and counterinsurgency, and has published on war and post-war detention and camp regimes. Notable publications on detention and camps include *Forgotten Captives in Japanese Occupied Asia* (co-edited with Kevin Blackburn), and a 2015 article in the *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* on population control in Malaya from 1948 to 1960. He is author of *The Malayan Emergency: Revolution and Counterinsurgency at the End of Empire* (Cambridge, 2021).

Sarah Kovner
is a Senior Research Scholar at the Arnold A. Saltzman Institute of War and Peace Studies at Columbia University, and was formerly an Associate Professor of History at the University of Florida. Sarah's first book, *Occupying Power: Sex Workers and Servicemen in Postwar Japan*, was a Choice Outstanding Academic Title, and won the best book prize of the Southeast Conference Association for Asian Studies. She is author of *Prisoners of the Empire: Inside Japanese POW Camps* (Harvard University Press, 2020).

James Leibold
is an Associate Professor and Head of the Department of Politics, Media and Philosophy at La Trobe University. His research expertise includes the politics of ethnicity, race and national identity in modern Chinese history and society, and he is currently engaged in research on ethnic policy-making and ethnic tensions in contemporary China with a particular focus on the restive western frontier and its Tibetan and Uyghur ethnic minorities. He is the author and co-editor of four books and over thirty peer-reviewed articles and book chapters, and a frequent contributor to the international media on these topics.

Hannah Loney
is Visiting Assistant Professor in Gender Studies at the Central European University, Vienna. Her research interests include women's and gender history, twentieth-century Southeast Asian and international history, transnational activism, histories of violence, oral history, memory, and nationalism. Her first book, *In Women's Words: Violence and Everyday Life during the Indonesian Occupation of East Timor*, was published in 2018 by Sussex Academic Press.

Jess Melvin
is a Discovery Early Career Researcher Award Fellow in the Department of History, School of Philosophical and Historical Inquiry, at the University of Sydney. She was previously Postdoctoral Fellow in Genocide Studies and Henry Hart Rice Faculty Fellow in Southeast Asian Studies at Yale University. She completed her PhD in Asian History at the University of Melbourne in 2015. She is the author of *The Army and the Indonesian Genocide: Mechanics of Mass Murder* (2018), co-editor of *The Indonesian Genocide of 1965: Causes, Dynamics and Legacies*, with Katherine McGregor and Annie Pohlman (2018), and co-editor of *The International People's Tribunal for 1965 and the Indonesian Genocide*, with Saskia Wieringa and Annie Pohlman (2019).

Nathalie Huynh Chau Nguyen
is Professor in History at Monash University. An Oxford graduate, she held four fellowships in 2005–2015 including two Australian Research Council

Fellowships and a Visiting Fellowship at Oxford University. She is the author of four books, including 2010 Choice Outstanding Academic Title *Memory Is Another Country: Women of the Vietnamese Diaspora* (Praeger, 2009), and *South Vietnamese Soldiers: Memories of the Vietnam War and After* (Praeger, 2016). She is editor of *New Perceptions of the Vietnam War* (McFarland, 2015). Her latest grant is for an ARC Discovery Project on the refugee legacy for second-generation Vietnamese in Australia.

Annie Pohlman
teaches Indonesian at the University of Queensland. She is author of *Women, Sexual Violence and the Indonesian Killings of 1965–66* (Routledge, 2015) and co-editor of a number of volumes dealing with mass atrocities, Asia and traumatic histories. Her research interests include genocide studies, torture, gendered experiences of violence, and oral testimony.

Jemma Purdey
is a Fellow at the Australia-Indonesia Centre and Adjunct Fellow, Department of Arts and Education, Deakin University. She has written widely on Indonesian politics and contemporary history and about Australia's relationship with Indonesia. Her books include *Anti-Chinese Violence in Indonesia, 1996–1998* (2006) and *From Vienna to Yogyakarta: The Life of Herb Feith* (2011) and she is co-author of *Indonesia: State and Society in Transition* (2019). Jemma is Chair of the board that publishes the magazine *Inside Indonesia*, co-host of the podcast *Talking Indonesia* and founding Director of the Australia-Indonesia Centre's ReelOzInd! Australia Indonesia Short Film Competition & Festival.

Ken M. P Setiawan
is a Lecturer in Asian and Indonesian Studies at the Asia Institute, University of Melbourne, and an Associate at the Centre for Indonesian Law, Islam and Society at the Melbourne Law School. Her research interests include globalisation and human rights as well as historical violence and transitional justice. She has published widely on the politics of human rights in Indonesia. Ken is the author of *Promoting Human Rights: National Human Rights Commissions in Indonesia and Malaysia* (Leiden University Press, 2013).

Paul Taucher
is a PhD candidate at Murdoch University, with degrees in Law and History (Honours). He was a 2018 National Library of Australia Summer Scholar. Paul's work focusses on how national military tribunals held Japanese commanders liable for crimes committed by their subordinates after the Second World War. Paul's article 'Escape from Justice: The Failed Prosecution of Baron Takasaki Masamitsu' was published in *War and History*, Vol. 28, no. 1 (2021), pp. 184–199.

Christina Twomey
is Professor of History and Head of the School of Philosophical, Historical and International Studies at Monash University. She is the author of *The Battle Within: POWs in Postwar Australia* (2018), *Australia's Forgotten Prisoners: Civilians Interned by the Japanese in World War Two* (2008) and, with co-author Mark Peel, *A History of Australia* (2011). She has published extensively on the history of wartime internment, prisoners of war, the photography of atrocity and histories of protection and humanitarianism. Her chapter in this volume is drawn from a broader project about the development of the concentration camp in colonial contexts at the turn of the twentieth century.

Sandra Wilson
is a historian of Japan and is a Fellow of the Asia Research Centre at Murdoch University. She is author of *The Manchurian Crisis and Japanese Society, 1931–33* (Routledge, 2002) and, with Robert Cribb, Beatrice Trefalt and Dean Aszkielowicz, *Japanese War Criminals: the Politics of Justice After the Second World War* (Columbia University Press, 2017). She continues to work with Robert Cribb on war crimes committed by the Japanese military.

CHAPTER 1

Detention in Camps in Asia: An Overview

Robert Cribb

Abstract

Detention camps are administrative institutions created by states to contain and segregate people whom they consider dangerous because of their actions, their potential actions or their identity. Camps have held both prisoners of war and civilian internees. It is often claimed that camps benefit detainees by protecting them from hostile elements in broader society and by training them for eventual integration. In practice detention disempowers detainees because it subjects them to unaccountable discipline, to a loss of hope and often to physical conditions that are spartan at best.

The term 'camp' was once a synonym for temporary accommodation outside urban areas. During the nineteenth century, state authorities began to use camps as places for the mass detention of people whose liberty they had reason to fear, both their own civilians and enemy soldiers captured in war. The international historiography of detention camps has focussed on the extermination camps of Nazi Germany and the counter-insurgency camps of Euro-American colonial powers. Although detention camps in Asia have been structurally similar to those in other parts of the world, the prime justification offered by state authorities in Asia for inflicting conditions resembling judicial punishment on formally innocent people has been the need to protect detainees and the rest of society. Detainees often live in terrible conditions, but the core purpose of the camps is social segregation. Agamben and Foucault see camps as a mirror reflecting broader repressive trends in society. The 'world-system' theory of Wallerstein, by contrast, suggests that they can be seen as oppressive institutions that enable freedom in other parts of society.

Keywords

detention camps – internment – prisoners of war – secrecy – timelessness – isolation – segregation – Agamben – Wallerstein

The term 'camp' was once a synonym for temporary accommodation outside urban areas. Armies, nomads, trading caravans, pilgrims, ambassadors, naturalists, artists and many others pitched camp as they moved across the

©

countryside. Camps might be large or small, luxurious or rough-and-ready, but they offered shelter and protection to those who occupied them. Campsites might be used repeatedly, but camps themselves were short-lived: occupants would stay overnight, or for a season, or for as long as was needed to transact business or battle, before moving on. Camps were thus part of a system of regional and even global integration, evanescent but essential elements in the movement of people and the exchange of goods and ideas across long distances.

During the nineteenth century, state authorities began to use camps as places for the mass detention of people whose liberty they had reason to fear. Detention camps were compact settlements, constructed and closely supervised by the authorities. They were called camps because they were set up rapidly, using materials suitable for quick construction; their designers typically sacrificed both durability and the comfort and privacy of the detainees to the prime purpose of accommodation.

Detention camps have a diverse history spanning more than two centuries and much of the globe. They were first used for prisoners of war during the French Revolutionary Wars at the end of the eighteenth century.[1] Camps also held the more than 400,000 prisoners taken by the two sides during the American Civil War of 1861–65 and the 382,000 French soldiers captured during the 1870–71 Franco-Prussian War.[2] The conditions in Civil War prisoner-of-war camps were notoriously bad. The Confederate camp holding Union prisoners at Andersonville, Georgia, was especially known for crowded, unhygienic conditions and inadequate food. After the war, the Andersonville commandant, Henry Wirz, was tried by Union authorities and sentenced to death over his

1 Francis Abell, *Prisoners of War in Britain 1756–1815: a Record of their Lives, their Romance and their Sufferings* (London: Oxford University Press, 1914); Gavin Daly, 'Napoleon's Lost Legions: French Prisoners of War in Britain, 1803–1814', *History* 89, Issue 295 (2004), pp. 361–380.

2 William Best Hesseltine, *Civil War Prisons: a Study in War Psychology* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1930); Richard G. Zevitz, 'Camp Randall Military Prison: Confederate Prisoners of War in Madison, Wisconsin', *Criminal Justice Studies* 22 no. 1 (2009), pp. 91–102; Micheal Clodfelter, *Warfare and Armed Conflicts: a Statistical Reference to Casualty and Other Figures, 1618–1991* (Jefferson NC: McFarland, 1992), p. 187; Roger Pickenpaugh, *Captives in Blue: the Civil War Prisons of the Confederacy* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2013); Roger Pickenpaugh, *Captives in Gray: the Civil War Prisons of the Union* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2009); Matthew Smallman-Raynor and Andrew D. Cliff, 'The Geographical Transmission of Smallpox in the Franco-Prussian War: Prisoner of War Camps and their Impact upon Epidemic Diffusion Processes in the Civil Settlement System of Prussia, 1870–71', *Medical History* 46 (2002), p. 242; Manfred Botzenhart, 'French Prisoners of War in Germany, 1870–71', in Stig Förster and Jörg Nagler (eds), *On the Road to Total War: the American Civil War and the German Wars of Unification, 1861–1871* (Washington, DC: German Historical Institute, 1997), pp. 587–593.

responsibility for the conditions there. Late in the nineteenth century, camps also came to be used for the mass detention of civilians. European and North American colonial authorities began to use detention camps to house the civilian inhabitants of regions in Cuba, South Africa and the Philippines where they were conducting counter-insurgency campaigns.[3]

Since that time, detention camps have been an important means of social and political control throughout the world. They have allowed states to contain and segregate people who are deemed dangerous because of their actions, their potential actions or their ethnicity. Detention camps resemble prisons, but the two types of institution are distinct in a crucial way: prisons are primarily the site of formal punishment of individuals who have been convicted and sentenced in judicial processes, whereas detention camps are not explicitly intended to punish for any specific offence. Convicted criminals are deprived of liberty by court order as judicial punishment. Detainees, by contrast, are confined by virtue of administrative fiat, not judicial decision, and the basis of their detention is mainly pre- emptive and precautionary, rather than punitive: they are detained to prevent them from acting in future, rather than as retribution for what they have done in the past.

In this volume, we focus on detention camps in Asia, a lens that allows us to offer new insights that are not highlighted in existing studies of detention camps. We pose three analytical questions. First, how do state authorities rationalise the infliction of conditions resembling judicial punishment on formally innocent people? Second, what is the meaning of detention for the rest of society, for those who are not detained? And third, how does detention shape the lives of those who are in custody? Together, the fourteen analyses of detention camps in modern Asia presented here begin to provide answers to these questions.

1 Detention Camps in the Twentieth Century

In 1926, Dutch authorities in colonial Indonesia established a detention camp for nationalist activists at Boven Digoel in the remote jungles of western New Guinea.[4] Prisoner-of-war camps were established on a large scale in Europe during the First and Second World Wars. They were established on a much smaller scale in Asia during the Second World War, the first Indochina War

3 Aidan Forth, *Barbed-Wire Imperialism: Britain's Empire of Camps, 1876–1903* (Berkeley CA: University of California Press, 2017), pp. 129–211.

4 Takashi Shiraishi, 'The Phantom World of Digoel', *Indonesia* 61 (1996), pp. 93–118.

(1946–54) and the Korean War (1950–53).[5] Over a period from 1918 to 1960, the Soviet Union consigned some 18 million of its citizens to camps, known collectively as the Gulag, in which more than a million died, though most of them were sent there as convicted criminals, not as administrative detainees.[6] Most notorious of all were the concentration camps of wartime Nazi Germany, which were instrumental in the Holocaust of European Jewry and in the enslavement of millions of others.[7] Japanese occupation authorities in Southeast Asia consigned much of the civilian European population to internment camps. On the other hand, apart from a brief experiment with civilian resettlement in Manchuria in the 1930s, the Japanese armed forces did not use detention camps as a counter-insurgency measure in their wartime empire.[8] At the start of the Pacific War, the United States interned tens of thousands of people of Japanese descent, while Australia and Canada interned smaller numbers. Many of the detainees were citizens of the host country.[9]

British colonial authorities in Kenya made extensive use of detention camps in combatting the 1952–60 nationalist Mau Mau uprising in Kenya. British and American authorities fighting communist insurgencies in Malaya and Vietnam in the 1960s and 1970s created what were expected to become permanent resettlement camps – called 'new villages' in Malaya and 'strategic hamlets' in Vietnam – in which rural populations were confined in order to break their connections with the insurgents.[10]

---

5 Sarah Kovner, *Prisoners of the Empire: Inside Japanese POW Camps* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2020); Ivan Cadeau, '1954–1956: le départ du corps expéditionnaire français d'Extrême-Orient', *Revue historique des armées* 258 (2010), par. 10; William C. Latham, *Cold Days in Hell: American POWs in Korea* (College Station TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2013); David Cheng Chang, *The Hijacked War: the Story of Chinese POWs in the Korean War* (Redwood City CA: Stanford University Press, 2020).

6 Steven A. Barnes, *Death and Redemption: the Gulag and the Shaping of Soviet Society* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011).

7 Omer Bartov, *The Holocaust: Origins, Implementation, Aftermath* (London: Routledge, 2000).

8 Chong-Sik Lee, *Counterinsurgency in Manchuria: the Japanese Experience, 1931–1940* (Santa Monica CA: Rand Corp., 1967), pp. 25–36.

9 Tetsuden Kashima, *Judgment Without Trial: Japanese American Imprisonment During World War II* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2003); Greg Robinson, *By Order of the President: FDR and the Internment of Japanese Americans* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2003); Yuriko Nagata, *Unwanted Aliens: Japanese Internment in Australia* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1996).

10 Souchou Yao, *The Malayan Emergency: a Small, Distant War* (Copenhagen: NIAS Press, 2016), pp. 97–115; Milton E. Osborne, *Strategic Hamlets in South Viet-Nam: a Survey and a Comparison* (Ithaca NY: Southeast Asia Program, Cornell University, 1965).

The use of detention camps in Asia later burgeoned as authoritarian regimes used them as a means of removing from society (and sometimes attempting to transform) people who were perceived as a threat to the political order. As early as the 1930s, the Republic of China had maintained a secret network of detention camps for the 're-education' of dissidents.[11] From the 1950s, the People's Republic of China maintained an extensive system of camps known by the name *laojiao* ('re-education through labour'). Citizens suspected of disruptive behaviour were consigned to these camps by police administrative procedures, rather than through the court system.[12] In around 2017, the Chinese authorities in the north-western Chinese region of Xinjiang began the camp detention of Muslim citizens of Uyghur ethnicity for purposes of 're-education' so thoroughgoing that it amounted to deculturation.[13] Meanwhile, in 2002, the United States established a detention camp for suspected terrorists in its military base at the Guantánamo Bay enclave in Cuba. Detainees were held without trial and subjected to torture.[14] Since the late twentieth century, many states have constructed what amount to detention camps to contain people who are often refugees but who have been classified as 'illegal immigrants'.[15] The term 'refugee camp', once denoting an often-inadequate place of sanctuary for people forced from their homes by conflict, increasingly denoted a new form of preventive detention.

---

11 Klaus Mühlhahn, 'The Dark Side of Globalization: the Concentration Camps in Republican China in Global Perspective', *World History Connected* 6 no. 1 (2009): 44 pars. http://www.historycooperative.org/journals/whc/6.1/muhlhahn.html.

12 Philip F. Williams and Yenna Wu, *The Great Wall of Confinement: the Chinese Prison Camp Through Contemporary Fiction and Reportage* (Berkeley CA: University of California Press, 2004), p. 2. This system of administrative detention is distinct from the larger *laogai* system, which uses the labour of convicted prisoners. See James D. Seymour and Richard Anderson, *New Ghosts, Old Ghosts: Prisons and Labor Reform Camps in China* (Armonk NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1998).

13 Sean R. Roberts, *The War on the Uyghurs: China's Internal Campaign Against a Muslim Minority* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 2020), pp. 199–235.

14 Diane Marie Amann, 'Guantánamo', *Columbia Journal of Transnational Law* 42 (2004), pp. 263–348; David Tyler Dunford, 'Security Sovereignty and the Preemption of Low-risk Detainees: a Look into "Battlelab" Torture Techniques Used at Guantanamo Bay', *International Journal of Law, Crime and Justice* 50 (2017), pp. 12–21; Regina Menachery Paulose, 'A New Dawn? Statelessness and Assam', *Groningen Journal of International Law* 7 no. 1 (2019), pp. 99–111.

15 Michela Ceccorulli and Nicola Labanca (eds), *The EU, Migration and the Politics of Administrative Detention* (London: Routledge, 2014); Eva-Lotta E. Hedman, 'Refuge, Governmentality and Citizenship: Capturing "Illegal Migrants" in Malaysia and Thailand', *Government and Opposition* 43 no. 2 (2008), pp. 358–383.

2 Historiography of Detention Camps

The conventional historiography of detention camps draws a stark contrast between two impulses: the desire of states to maintain camps as an uncompromising method of dealing with those they portray as society's enemies, and a global ethical impulse, reflected most strongly in international humanitarian law, which prescribes decent treatment for all human beings.[16] Sometimes this historiography exhibits a qualified triumphalism, in that it celebrates advances in international law while acknowledging frequent setbacks, in the form of the repeated breaches of that law that have blighted world history. The investigative journalist and the investigative historian play an important part in exposing conditions in camps in this narrative. The struggle between those who would conceal the existence of detention camps and the conditions inside them and those who would expose the truths of detention is part of the broader, complex arms race between state secrecy and public information. Sometimes, though, the tone of this historiography is more despairing, suggesting that the use of mass detention has not been tamed by international law.[17]

Some scholars, who constitute a critical stream in the global historiography of detention camps, have argued that this conventional historiography fails to pay attention to the structural forces generating the detention camp systems. This criticism is expressed in two lines of analysis, neither of which draws significantly on Asian cases in constructing its arguments. One line of analysis stresses the racial character of detention camps, focusing on their use in colonial circumstances in Latin America and Africa and interpreting present-day detention camps for refugees and illegal immigrants as a continuing element in the race-based hegemony of the Global North. The critical historiography of detention camps often identifies racism as a key, specific factor that allows ruthlessness to prevail over humanitarian principle. Another line of analysis, dominated by the insights of the philosophers Agamben and Foucault, places the concentration camps of Nazi Germany at the heart of the detention camp phenomenon and views the detention camp as an archetypal form of social control that infects society as a whole.

16 See, for instance, Sibylle Scheipers (ed.), *Prisoners in War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); Andrea Pitzer, *One Long Night: a Global History of Concentration Camps* (New York NY: Little, Brown, 2017); Elizabeth Grimm Arsenault, *How the Gloves Came Off: Lawyers, Policy Makers, and Norms in the Debate on Torture* (New York NY: Columbia University Press, 2017).

17 See, for instance, Klaus Mühlhahn, 'The Concentration Camp in Global Historical Perspective', *History Compass* 8 no. 6 (2010), pp. 543–561.

The contribution of this volume, in placing Asian cases at the centre, is to offer a different paradigm for understanding detention camps. The race-centred approach does not adequately encompass the nature of the detention camp system. The approach championed by Agamben and Foucault, likewise, does not travel well beyond its roots in European history of the mid-twentieth century. Borrowing from world-system theory, which was initiated by Immanuel Wallerstein,[18] we argue that applying a different lens provides a better guide to the study of detention camps. Wallerstein does not discuss detention camps or prisons, but world-system theory helps us to understand that camps constitute a system of geographical segregation which allows some parts of the globe to be free by means of constricting freedom in other parts. World-system theory applies convincingly to Asian detention camps as well as camps elsewhere.

The race-centred approach resonates in many Asian cases. The willingness of colonial powers to resort to detention camps to counter resistance in their colonies when they did not do so in the metropoles (Twomey and Hack in this volume), the vast difference between Nazi Germany's decent treatment of Western prisoners of war and its brutal handling of Soviet prisoners, the racial rhetoric that accompanied Japanese ill-treatment of prisoners of war (Kovner in this volume), the willingness of authorities to shut non-Western asylum-seekers in long-term camps (Purdey), and the decision of the Chinese authorities to intern huge numbers of Uyghurs (Leibold) all point to a powerful racial dimension in the history of detention camps.

Nonetheless, the racism evident in many of the camp systems mentioned above was not that of white hegemony over people of colour. People of European descent were the victims of Japanese racism, Vietnamese the victims of Indonesian racism, Uyghurs the victims of Chinese racism. In all these cases, racism appears as a manifestation of power relations, rather than as an underlying cause of oppression. In many Asian cases, moreover, race is absent or muted. The chapters on independent Burma's Cocos Island detention camp (Cheesman), on Indonesian camps established after 1965 to detain alleged communists (Pohlman, Melvin, Setiawan) and on re-education camps for people associated with the defeated southern regime in Vietnam after 1975 (Nguyen) all discuss detention camps whose basis was political, rather than racial or ethnic. For us, the ethnic dimension is just one of several important characteristics of detention camps.

18 Immanuel Wallerstein, *World-Systems Analysis: an Introduction* (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 2004).

3 Rationalising Detention

The core purpose of detention camps has generally been to protect the interests of the broader community (as understood by state authorities) from the people whom they confine. Many authorities even invoke the existence of camps as evidence of their commitment to protecting society. On the other hand, camps are tools of segregation: they seclude their occupants from the rest of the world. Many camps are meant to be invisible or at least opaque to the outside world. The rest of the population either does not know exactly where they are, or does not know what happens within the camp. Even when authorities are unable to conceal the existence of detention camps, they generally make efforts to prevent the outside world from becoming aware of conditions inside them. During the Second World War, Japanese authorities blocked visits by Red Cross inspectors to prisoner-of-war camps where conditions were poor.[19] The British authorities in Kenya destroyed records of the massive detention camp system they had created in the 1950s to counter the anti-colonial Mau Mau movement.[20] After 2013, the Australian government veiled conditions in its off-shore detention camps for asylum-seekers by invoking operational confidentiality.[21] In 2018, Chinese authorities offered bland reassurances about conditions in their re-education camps for Uyghurs but refused to permit monitoring of the treatment of the detainees.[22]

This secretiveness has significant implications for the historical study of detention camps. There is a huge disparity among detention camp systems in the volume of documentation available to the researcher. The wartime detention camps of Japan and Nazi Germany have been abundantly documented because the regimes that created them were overthrown and the liberated inmates made sure their experiences were recorded. By contrast, detention camp experiences have remained opaque in countries where the victims had

19 Sarah Kovner, 'A War of Words: Allied Captivity and Swiss Neutrality in the Pacific, 1941–1945', *Diplomatic History* 4 no. 4 (2017), pp. 719–746.

20 Caroline Elkins, *Imperial Reckoning: the Untold Story of Britain's Gulag in Kenya* (New York NY: Henry Holt, 2005), p. 371.

21 Paul Farrell, 'Journalists Reporting on Asylum Seekers Referred to Australian Police', *The Guardian*, 22 Jan. 2015, https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2015/jan/22/journalists-reporting-on-asylum-seekers-referred-to-australian-police, accessed 15 Sept 2019.

22 Nectar Gan and Mimi Lau, 'China Changes Law to Recognise "Re-Education Camps" in Xinjiang', *South China Morning Post*, 10 Oct. 2018, https://www.scmp.com/news/china/politics/article/2167893/china-legalises-use-re-education-camps-religious-extremists, accessed 15 Sept. 2019.

fewer opportunities to record their stories and where repressive regimes suppressed those able to testify.[23]

Detention camps are highly successful in their primary purpose of segregating supposedly dangerous groups from broader society. In addition, state authorities often rationalise their confinement of formally innocent people by claiming they aim to protect and assist the detainees, rather than protecting the wider society. In the aftermath of the 1923 Kanto earthquake, Japanese authorities in Yokohama forced Korean residents of the region into a camp, ostensibly to protect them from Japanese mobs who suspected an opportunistic Korean insurrection.[24] Under the 1929 Geneva Convention, the protection of prisoners of war from danger and hardship is enshrined as a core obligation of the detaining power. The British authorities who confined Malayan Chinese in camps in the 1950s to prevent them from providing supplies and information to communist guerrillas in the jungle (Hack in this volume) claimed that they were providing them with a secure haven in which they would be safe from intimidation and depredation by the guerrilla forces. The United States militaries in the Philippines at the beginning of the twentieth century (Twomey in this volume) and in Vietnam in the 1960s, and the Indonesian army in East Timor in the 1980s (Loney), all maintained that the confinement of ordinary people was a means of protecting them from malign guerrilla forces. In interning European civilians in Java during the Second World War, the Japanese military authorities asserted that they were protecting those civilians from the risk of attack by resentful local people.[25]

Detaining authorities have sometimes extended this rationalisation to promise that detention will reform and thereby improve the detainees. The aim of 'rehabilitating' communists to be peaceful members of a non-communist society was part of the detention strategy of the British authorities in Malaya (Hack) and the Indonesian authorities on Buru Island (Setiawan). The re-education camps of post-1975 Vietnam and camps to which Uyghurs in contemporary China are consigned, discussed in this volume by Nguyen and Leibold respectively, also reflect this form of rationalisation. For all their brutality, camps have commonly been, at least implicitly, a notionally humane alternative to killing prisoners and to allowing the slaughter of civilian populations by

23 On North Korea, for instance, see Monica Kim, *The Interrogation Rooms of the Korean War: the Untold History* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 2019).

24 Hasegawa Kenji, 'The Massacre of Koreans in Yokohama in the Aftermath of the Great Kanto Earthquake of 1923', *Monumenta Nipponica* 75 no. 1 (2020), pp. 91–122.

25 Explanation of Ordinance No. 33 of 2602, *Kan Po* no. 3 (Sept. 2602 [i.e. 1942]), p. 11, no 644, p. 19, Collectie 400 Indische Collectie, NIOD Instituut voor Oorlogs-, Holocaust- en Genocidestudies (Amsterdam).

armies in war. Some camps have been created partly in order to kill captives – the Nazi extermination camps for Jews, the Wehrmacht prisoner-of-war camps for Soviet captives on the eastern front in the Second World War[26] and the Indonesian extermination camps for communists (Melvin in this volume) – but such camps have been relatively uncommon, albeit enormously costly of human life in absolute terms. The tension between the humanitarian rationales offered by the detaining authorities and the oppressive reality of life in most camps lies at the core of this book.

4 Detention Camps and the Broader Society

The theoretical and practical relationship between detention camps and the broader society is a subject of scholarly debate. In *Discipline and Punish* (1977), Michel Foucault identified the prison as an archetypal form of intense social control which provided a model for other social institutions such as the army, the school, the orphanage and the workhouse.[27] In the recent research field of carceral geography, Foucault's insight has underpinned what is known as the 'diffuse carceral model', which identifies a wide circle of institutions, including public housing, shelters for the homeless and even universities, as marked with carcerality, that is, with significant elements of a detention regime.[28] In this analysis, detention camps are important not just in their own right but also for what they presage for the rest of society.

Specific theoretical discussion of detention camps is dominated by the work of Giorgio Agamben, most notably his 1995 work, published in English in 1998 as *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, where he posits the camp as what he calls the 'nomos', or 'hidden matrix', of the modern, by which he means that it is pervasive but not immediately obvious.[29] Agamben takes the concentration camps of Nazi Germany as his unstated paradigm. For him, the camp is the point at which totalitarianism and democracy converge, the space where the exception – the suspension of law, the reduction of the human being to 'bare life' – becomes the rule.

---

26 Rüdiger Overmans, 'The Treatment of Prisoners of War in the Eastern European Theatre of Operations, 1941–56', in Scheipers (ed.), *Prisoners in War*, pp. 127–140.

27 Michel Foucault, trans. by Alan Sheridan, *Discipline and Punish: the Birth of the Prison* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1979).

28 Dominique Moran, Jennifer Turner and Anna K. Schliehe, 'Conceptualizing the Carceral in Carceral Geography', *Progress in Human Geography* 42 no. 5 (2018,) pp. 675–676.

29 Giorgio Agamben, trans. by Daniel Heller-Roazen, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford CA: Stanford University Press, 1998), pp. 69–101.

Agamben's writing is marked by rhetorical flourishes and far-reaching claims which arise especially from his unexplained identification of the Nazi concentration camps as the archetype of detention camps in general. In his writings, moreover, and in the work of those inspired by him, historical references and claims are often made speculatively and selectively, rather than with fully developed argument. Broadly speaking, Agamben maintains that the camp is a place whose occupants have been deprived of all legal protection. He characterises the camp as the state at its most refined: the camp represents what the state would like to do for the whole of society. Hence, he argues, the model of governance refined in the camp system 'infects' the rest of the body politic, with dire consequences for society.

The approach to detention camps that draws on the insights of Foucault and Agamben, including the field of carceral geography, blurs the boundaries between detention and non- detention. Allspach coins the term 'transcarceral' to capture the idea of a sense of confinement that reaches beyond physical place.[30] Gill et al., too, refer scathingly to 'the fantasy of a separate carceral sphere, whereby carceral and non-carceral are neatly segregated'.[31] Their point is that those who are not in prison are not necessarily free. Systems of surveillance and restriction, along with social and judicial mechanisms that propel released individuals back to prison, allow the prison system to extend its tentacles into society more broadly. Such an approach, however, brings the risk of downplaying the specific characteristics of detention and thus of trivialising it. As Hamlin and Speer point out, the diffuse carceral geography model encourages researchers to confuse self-imposed isolation, as seen in gated communities, and even banal experiences, such as being stuck in traffic, with true confinement.[32]

Immanuel Wallerstein's 'world-system' analysis suggests a very different approach to detention camps from that based on Foucault and Agamben.[33] For Wallerstein, the essence of the international system as a whole is the selective permeability of borders, which permits capital, but not people, to move freely

30 Anke Allspach, 'Landscapes of (Neo-)Liberal Control: the Transcarceral Spaces of Federally Sentenced Women in Canada', *Gender, Place & Culture: a Journal of Feminist Geography* 17 no. 6 (2010), pp. 705–723.

31 Nick Gill, Deirdre Conlon, Dominique Moran and Andrew Burridge, 'Carceral Circuitry: New Directions in Carceral Geography', *Progress in Human Geography* 42 no. 2 (2016), p. 197.

32 Moran, Turner and Schliehe, 'Conceptualizing the Carceral in Carceral Geography', pp. 675–676; Madeleine Hamlin and Jessie Speer, 'The Politics of Conceptualizing the Carceral: a Commentary on Moran et al. (2017)', *Progress in Human Geography* 42 no. 5 (2018), p. 800.

33 Wallerstein, *World-Systems Analysis*.

among states. World-system theory explains the political division of the world into sovereign states as a product of a global division of labour that requires different kinds of regime in different parts of the world – some prosperous and liberal, some exploitative and repressive. Within states, Wallerstein's approach focuses our attention on spatial differentiation, specifically on the mechanisms that allow different degrees of freedom within the borders of a single state. Wallerstein's insights lead us to expect legal and administrative differentiation within the territory of a single state so that different functions are carried out in different zones.

Wallerstein's framework can be extended to detention camps and prisons. His analysis implies that the unfreedom of detainees is not a direct threat to the liberty of the rest of society. On the contrary, it suggests the disturbing conclusion that unfreedom is a price that detainees pay to permit the freedom of others. The detention camp enables states to govern the majority (relatively) humanely by removing individuals and social groups that it sees as disruptive. The special systems of restriction and control that function within the detention camp do not extend beyond the camp. The segmentation of society into zones with different degrees of freedom is partly physical, relying on walls and barbed wire, but it is also often legal. Between 2002 and 2008, the United States government excised Guantanamo Bay from the jurisdiction of the U.S. constitution so it could withhold from detainees legal rights that would have applied in the United States itself.[34] Similarly, in 2001 Australia excised a number of its offshore islands from its 'migration zone' so that asylum-seekers arriving there would not be able to invoke the legal protections that would otherwise have been available to them under the Australian constitution.[35] European countries have also made increasing use of so-called 'extraterritorial camps', where the legal protections of metropolitan law are weaker or absent.[36]

The wide range of cases we present in this volume gives us the opportunity to challenge and also to develop the approaches of both Agamben and Wallerstein. As suggested above, Agamben's analysis of the moral and political condition of detention as 'bare life' moves us productively beyond the narrower (though important) criminological question of the effectiveness of

34 David Cole, 'Rights Over Borders: Transnational Constitutionalism and Guantanamo Bay', *Cato Supreme Court Review* (2008), pp. 47–61.

35 Peter Mares, *Borderline: Australia's Treatment of Refugees and Asylum Seekers* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2001), p. 6.

36 Daniel Ghezelbash, *Refuge Lost: Asylum Law in an Interdependent World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

confinement as punishment.[37] The school of thought modelled on Agamben, however, takes the European experience as archetypal and pays relatively little attention to events in other parts of the world.[38] In contrast, by drawing on a broad range of cases in Asia from the late nineteenth century up to the present day, our work presents a more specific, historically sensitive, and less Eurocentric analysis of the emergence and operation of detention camps and their imbrication with the mechanisms of the state.

Specifically, we disagree with Agamben's view that the Nazi camps are paradigmatic: our evidence from Asia indicates that they are not typical of detention camps as a social and political phenomenon. We disagree, too, with Agamben's assertion that the detention camp is to be understood as a model for the state's intention towards society. Mechanisms for social control have become increasingly sophisticated and do not necessarily have their roots in the detention camp system. The rise of big data as a tool of social control is a product of capitalism at least as much as it is initiated by the authoritarian state.[39] China's recently introduced Social Credit system, in which individuals receive a score based on their compliance with social norms which in turn determines their access to social facilities, appears to have its roots in Confucian ideas of the perfectibility of humans under ethical guidance.[40] Instead of seeing the camp as a microcosm of the social future, we see it as an extreme manifestation of social segregation. Following Wallerstein's characterisation of the modern world-system as a system of different political and economic regimes in different geographical zones, we believe that camps should not be positioned as the forerunner of totalitarianism, but as a specific means of permitting barely visible pockets of totalitarianism within an otherwise relatively open society. Whereas researchers exploring the insights of Agamben have stressed the diffusion of totalitarianism from the camp into other institutions of containment,

37 Alison Liebling and Shadd Maruna, 'Introduction: the Effects of Imprisonment Revisited', in Alison Liebling and Shadd Maruna (eds), *The Effects of Imprisonment* (London: Routledge, 2005), pp. 1–29.

38 Lee et al. acknowledge the difficulty of applying Agamben's insights outside the European context and find that some aspects of his thought travel better than others. See Seung-Ook Lee, Najeeb Jan and Joel Wainwright, 'Agamben, Postcoloniality, and Sovereignty in South Korea', *Antipode* 46 no. 3 (2014), pp. 650–668.

39 Alessandro Mantelero, 'Social Control, Transparency, and Participation in the Big Data World', *Journal of Internet Law* (April 2014), pp. 23–29.

40 Dean G. Rojek, 'Social Control in the People's Republic of China', *Criminal Justice Review* 14 no. 2 (1989), pp. 141–153; Mirjam Meissner, 'China's Social Credit System', *Merics China Monitor*, 24 May 2017, https://www.merics.org/sites/default/files/2017-09/China%20Monitor_39_SOCS_EN.pdf, accessed 15 Sept. 2019.

we stress the distinctively oppressive character of camps, which marks them off from other institutions of territorial segregation, including reservations for indigenous peoples, gated communities and nation states.

5 Life in Custody

How, then, does detention shape the lives of those who are in custody? Disempowerment is central to the detention experience. Writing in 1995, Giorgio Agamben characterised this situation as 'bare life', that is, existence that is entirely without agency, and entirely dependent upon external powers.[41] Disempowerment begins with the reasons for detention: unlike convicted prisoners, detainees are held because of who or what they are, or what they may do in the future, not what they have done. They are confined by virtue of an administrative decision which they have no possibility of influencing, rather than through a judicial process that offers at least a faint hope of procedural justice. The Australian, British, Dutch and American prisoners of war of the Japanese (Wilson in this volume) entered Japanese captivity during the Second World War as a consequence of surrender by their commanders. Most of them had done little fighting in the brief campaign that ended in Japanese victory and they felt humiliated by the fact that their contribution to the war effort had been so minimal.[42] Such humiliation must have added to the sense of disempowerment in the camps.

Disempowerment also arises from the sense of timelessness in detention camps. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, as incarceration became the principal mode of punishment in modern judicial systems, courts developed a fine-grained sense of time, calibrating prison sentences according to the seriousness of the crime, and making the recovery of freedom dependent on the passage of time (and often also on good behaviour). Detention by administrative fiat, however, has no natural end. The detainees remain in custody for as long as the political and social circumstances that led to their detention still apply. Wars can drag on for years; post-war settlement of displaced people can take decades; political threats remain significant, or emphasising them remains useful. Activists may present a political threat to the incumbent regime for the whole of their lives. The colonial authorities in the Netherlands

41 Agamben, *Homo Sacer*.

42 Ken Inglis, *Sacred Places: War Memorials in the Australian Landscape* (Carlton, Vic.: Melbourne University Press, 1998), pp. 113–116, 362.

Indies intended that activists dispatched to Boven Digul in New Guinea would stay there until they died.[43]

A special characteristic of detention camps, therefore, is that they place life on hold for an indefinite period. Even if the authorities expect that detention will be temporary, maintained only as long as the political and social circumstances that led to detention still apply, detainees seldom foresee when they will be released. The normal sequences of human life – education for children, initiation into adulthood for adolescents, employment and the setting up of a household for young adults, accumulation of resources for those in mid-life, health care in old age – are mostly missing. Whereas years spent in a prison cell are understood to redeem a prisoner for the crime he or she committed, time spent in detention has no redeeming quality. Most detainees experience the sense that years of life have been wasted, lost to no purpose.

Article 75 of the 1929 Geneva Convention on prisoners of war prescribed the prompt repatriation and release of prisoners of war at the end of hostilities.[44] The Convention thus gave military detainees some prospect that their detention would be limited in time. Camps for domestic detainees, by contrast, were often not created for a short-term, specific purpose; rather, they became sites of indefinite residence for those forced to inhabit them. Release came to the Burmese detainees on Cocos Island (Cheesman in this volume) and to the Indonesian detainees on Buru Island (Setiawan) not because of any expiry of sentence but because of political change at the centre. This element of timelessness has typically worked to make the experience of detention camp life profoundly bleak for detainees, regardless of the physical circumstances of confinement. Even where the detention process held out some prospect of eventual release, all the decisions that might lead to release were in the hands of the captors. The possibility of relief was dependent on the changing, sometimes capricious, political judgment of the captors, not on a prison term fixed in advance.

From the older meaning of 'camp', detention camps inherited an expectation of rudimentary facilities. The core elements of the detention camp have remained consistent over time: sleeping quarters, sanitary facilities, dining room and infirmary. The camp is a small town or city, but the more genteel amenities of urban life are often missing: libraries and schools, places of worship, theatres and concerts, cafes and restaurants. Sometimes detainees work hard

43 Shiraishi, 'The Phantom World of Digoel'.

44 Convention Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War, Geneva, 27 July 1929, in Dietrich Schindler and Jiří Toman (eds), *The Laws of Armed Conflicts: a Collection of Conventions, Resolutions, and Other Documents* (Dordrecht: Nijhoff, 3rd edn, 1988), p. 356.

to recreate a cultural life within their community,[45] but the constriction of opportunities for sociality and recreation is another part of the disempowerment that detainees typically experience.

The detention camp, moreover, is an economic dependency, reliant on external authorities for the basic supplies needed for survival. Dependency is not only psychologically disempowering, but in practical terms can lead to shortages of food and medicine (Taucher in this volume). In the Japanese prisoner-of-war camps in the Second World War, conditions could be very poor, partly because Japanese authorities initially had no policy framework for dealing with the prisoners, let alone the physical facilities in which to incarcerate them. Overall, however, the circumstances of the camps varied widely over time and in different locations, as both Wilson and Kovner show in this volume. Harsh discipline and shortages of supplies could create miserable conditions in some prisoner-of-war camps run by Japanese authorities, whereas in officers' camps far from the front line and not the site of any critical labour projects, Allied military captives led relatively comfortable lives. On Buru Island in Indonesia in the 1970s (Setiawan in this volume), detainees were expected to clear jungle and grow crops to achieve self-sufficiency, but for many necessities they remained dependent on outside supply.

In some cases, moreover, detention camps have been a source of forced labour for the authorities. During the Second World War, Japanese military authorities used prisoners of war to labour on strategic projects such as the Thailand-Burma Railway and construction of airfields throughout newly acquired territories, and in mines and factories in Japan, Taiwan and Korea. After the war, Western Allied authorities in Southeast Asia and Soviet authorities in Siberia used captured Japanese soldiers as coerced labour on a vast scale.[46] After suppressing the 1965 coup in Indonesia, authorities there made use of some of the alleged communist detainees as forced labourers, including for sex work.[47]

For those in charge of detention camps, the 'bare life' of the detainees has often created problems of discipline. Authorities commonly seek to control

45 See, for instance, Sears Eldredge, '*Wonder Bar*: Music and Theatre as Strategies for Survival in a Second World War POW Hospital Camp', in Gilly Carr and Harold Mytum (eds), *Cultural Heritage and Prisoners of War: Creativity Behind Barbed Wire* (New York NY: Routledge, 2012), pp. 19–32.

46 Andrew Roadnight, 'Sleeping with the Enemy: Britain, Japanese Troops and the Netherlands East Indies, 1945–1946', *History* 87 issue 286 (2002), pp. 245–268; William F. Nimmo, *Behind a Curtain of Silence: Japanese in Soviet Custody, 1945–1956* (Westport CT: Greenwood Press, 1988); Andrew Barshay, *The Gods Left First: the Captivity and Repatriation of Japanese POWs in Northeast Asia* (Berkeley CA: University of California Press, 2013).

47 Annie Pohlman, *Women, Sexual Violence and the Indonesian Killings of 1965–66* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015), chapter 8.

detainees with relatively few guards, and even with physical barriers such as walls and barbed wire, the disparity in numbers between detainees and guards always presents risks. The kidnapping of the American camp commander by North Korean prisoners of war in the camp on Koje island in South Korea in 1952 (Chae in this volume) was a rare but telling illustration of the challenges of keeping detainees in order. Because of these challenges, detention camps have been marked by regimes of harsh discipline intended to sap the spirit of the detainees and to forestall organised resistance (Taucher in this volume). Camp authorities exercise enormous and mostly unaccountable authority over detainees, not just because they can, as external supervising powers are generally indifferent to abuses of power within camps, but because the arbitrary disciplining of detainees is often a key element in maintaining control.

The relationship between detainees and guards is not the only political relationship in detention camps. Camps themselves are tense communities characterised by complex hierarchies. In prisoner-of-war camps, the captured soldiers are usually subject to the authority of their own commanders as well as that of the camp personnel. In civilian camps, there is almost always a formal or informal group of detainees who act as intermediaries between camp authorities and inmates. Writing on Nazi concentration camps, Wachsmann has described the ambiguous role of the Kapo, or section head, a prisoner who took authority within a part of the camp and negotiated with the camp authorities both in self-interest and in the interests of the other detainees.[48] Chae's chapter in this volume describes the complex ideological and national mix of prisoners of war held by United Nations forces in the Korean conflict of 1950–53 and the stresses that resulted from this mix. Acute tensions among detainees, sometimes resulting in rape and murder, sometimes simply undermining the possibility of cooperation in the face of adversity, are a feature of camp societies. Purdey describes this phenomenon in the Vietnamese refugee camp on the Indonesian island of Galang. In these cases, absence of external control unleashes enormous scope for excess.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Sandra Wilson, Christina Twomey, Sarah Kovner and Nick Cheesman for helpful comments on early drafts of this chapter.

48 Nikolaus Wachsmann, *KL: a History of the Nazi Concentration Camps* (New York NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2015), chapter 10.

References

Abell, Francis, *Prisoners of War in Britain 1756–1815: a Record of their Lives, their Romance and their Sufferings* (London: Oxford University Press, 1914).

Agamben, Giorgio, trans. by Daniel Heller-Roazen, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford CA: Stanford University Press, 1998).

Allspach, Anke, 'Landscapes of (Neo-)Liberal Control: the Transcarceral Spaces of Federally Sentenced Women in Canada', *Gender, Place & Culture: a Journal of Feminist Geography* 17 no. 6 (2010), pp. 705–723.

Amann, Diane Marie, 'Guantánamo', *Columbia Journal of Transnational Law* 42 (2004), pp. 263–348.

Arsenault, Elizabeth Grimm, *How the Gloves Came Off: Lawyers, Policy Makers, and Norms in the Debate on Torture* (New York NY: Columbia University Press, 2017).

Barnes, Steven A., *Death and Redemption: the Gulag and the Shaping of Soviet Society* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011).

Barshay, Andrew, *The Gods Left First: the Captivity and Repatriation of Japanese POWs in Northeast Asia* (Berkeley CA: University of California Press, 2013).

Bartov, Omer, *The Holocaust: Origins, Implementation, Aftermath* (London: Routledge, 2000).

Botzenhart, Manfred, 'French Prisoners of War in Germany, 1870–71', in Stig Förster and Jörg Nagler (eds), *On the Road to Total War: the American Civil War and the German Wars of Unification, 1861–1871* (Washington DC: German Historical Institute, 1997), pp. 587–593.

Cadeau, Ivan, '1954–1956: le départ du corps expéditionnaire français d'Extrême-Orient', *Revue historique des armées* 258 (2010), pp. 67–81.

Ceccorulli, Michela, and Nicola Labanca (eds), *The EU, Migration and the Politics of Administrative Detention* (London: Routledge, 2014).

Chang, David Cheng, *The Hijacked War: the Story of Chinese POWs in the Korean War* (Redwood City CA: Stanford University Press, 2020).

Clodfelter, Micheal, *Warfare and Armed Conflicts: a Statistical Reference to Casualty and Other Figures, 1618–1991* (Jefferson NC: McFarland, 1992).

Cole, David, 'Rights Over Borders: Transnational Constitutionalism and Guantanamo Bay', *Cato Supreme Court Review* (2008), pp. 47–61.

Daly, Gavin, 'Napoleon's Lost Legions: French Prisoners of War in Britain, 1803–1814', *History* 89, Issue 295 (2004), pp. 361–380.

Dunford, David Tyler, 'Security Sovereignty and the Preemption of Low-risk Detainees: a Look into "Battlelab" Torture Techniques Used at Guantanamo Bay', *International Journal of Law, Crime and Justice* 50 (2017), pp. 12–21.

Eldredge, Sears, '*Wonder Bar*: Music and Theatre as Strategies for Survival in a Second World War POW Hospital Camp', in Gilly Carr and Harold Mytum (eds), *Cultural*

Heritage and Prisoners of War: Creativity Behind Barbed Wire (New York NY: Routledge, 2012), pp. 19–32.

Elkins, Caroline, *Imperial Reckoning: the Untold Story of Britain's Gulag in Kenya* (New York NY: Henry Holt, 2005).

Farrell, Paul, 'Journalists Reporting on Asylum Seekers Referred to Australian Police', *The Guardian*, 22 Jan. 2015, https://www.theguardian.com/australia- news/2015/jan/22/journalists-reporting-on-asylum-seekers-referred-to-australian-police, accessed 15 Sept 2019.

Forth, Aidan, *Barbed-Wire Imperialism: Britain's Empire of Camps, 1876–1903* (Berkeley CA: University of California Press, 2017).

Foucault, Michel, trans. by Alan Sheridan, *Discipline and Punish: the Birth of the Prison* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1979).

Gan, Nectar, and Mimi Lau, 'China Changes Law to Recognise "Re-Education Camps" in Xinjiang', *South China Morning Post*, 10 Oct. 2018, https://www.scmp.com/news/china/politics/article/2167893/china-legalises-use-re-education-camps-religious-extremists, accessed 15 Sept. 2019.

Ghezelbash, Daniel, *Refuge Lost: Asylum Law in an Interdependent World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

Gill, Nick, Deirdre Conlon, Dominique Moran and Andrew Burridge, 'Carceral Circuitry: New Directions in Carceral Geography', *Progress in Human Geography* 42 no. 2 (2016), pp. 183–204.

Hamlin, Madeleine, and Jessie Speer, 'The Politics of Conceptualizing the Carceral: a Commentary on Moran et al. (2017)', *Progress in Human Geography* 42 no. 5 (2018), pp. 799–802.

Hasegawa Kenji, 'The Massacre of Koreans in Yokohama in the Aftermath of the Great Kanto Earthquake of 1923', *Monumenta Nipponica* 75 no. 1 (2020), pp. 91–122.

Hedman, Eva-Lotta E., 'Refuge, Governmentality and Citizenship: Capturing "Illegal Migrants" in Malaysia and Thailand', *Government and Opposition* 43 no. 2 (2008), pp. 358–383.

Hesseltine, William Best, *Civil War Prisons: a Study in War Psychology* (Columbus OH: Ohio State University Press, 1930).

Inglis, Ken, *Sacred Places: War Memorials in the Australian Landscape* (Carlton, Vic.: Melbourne University Press, 1998).

Kashima, Tetsuden, *Judgment Without Trial: Japanese American Imprisonment During World War II* (Seattle WA: University of Washington Press, 2003).

Kim, Monica, *The Interrogation Rooms of the Korean War: the Untold History* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 2019).

Kovner, Sarah, 'A War of Words: Allied Captivity and Swiss Neutrality in the Pacific, 1941–1945', *Diplomatic History* 4 no. 4 (2017), pp. 719–746.

Kovner, Sarah, *Prisoners of the Empire: Inside Japanese POW Camps* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2020).

Latham, William C., *Cold Days in Hell: American POWs in Korea* (College Station TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2013).

Lee, Chong-Sik, *Counterinsurgency in Manchuria: the Japanese Experience, 1931–1940* (Santa Monica CA: Rand Corp., 1967).

Lee, Seung-Ook, Najeeb Jan and Joel Wainwright, 'Agamben, Postcoloniality, and Sovereignty in South Korea', *Antipode* 46 no. 3 (2014), pp. 650–668.

Liebling, Alison, and Shadd Maruna, 'Introduction: the Effects of Imprisonment Revisited', in Alison Liebling and Shadd Maruna (eds), *The Effects of Imprisonment* (London: Routledge, 2005), pp. 1–29.

Mantelero, Alessandro, 'Social Control, Transparency, and Participation in the Big Data World', *Journal of Internet Law* (April 2014), pp. 23–29.

Meissner, Mirjam, 'China's Social Credit System', *Merics China Monitor*, 24 May 2017, https://www.merics.org/sites/default/files/2017–09/China%20Monitor_39_SOCS_EN.pdf, accessed 15 Sept. 2019.

Moran, Dominique, Jennifer Turner and Anna K. Schliehe, 'Conceptualizing the Carceral in Carceral Geography', *Progress in Human Geography* 42 no. 5 (2018,) pp. 675–676.

Mühlhahn, Klaus, 'The Concentration Camp in Global Historical Perspective', *History Compass* 8 no. 6 (2010), pp. 543–561.

Mühlhahn, Klaus, 'The Dark Side of Globalization: the Concentration Camps in Republican China in Global Perspective', *World History Connected* 6 no. 1 (2009): 44 pars. http://www.historycooperative.org/journals/whc/6.1/muhlhahn.html.

Nagata, Yuriko, *Unwanted Aliens: Japanese Internment in Australia* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1996).

Nimmo, William F., *Behind a Curtain of Silence: Japanese in Soviet Custody, 1945–1956* (Westport CT: Greenwood Press, 1988).

Osborne, Milton E., *Strategic Hamlets in South Viet-Nam: a Survey and a Comparison* (Ithaca NY: Southeast Asia Program, Cornell University, 1965).

Overmans, Rüdiger, 'The Treatment of Prisoners of War in the Eastern European Theatre of Operations, 1941–56', in Scheipers (ed.), *Prisoners in War*, pp. 127–140.

Paulose, Regina Menachery, 'A New Dawn? Statelessness and Assam', *Groningen Journal of International Law* 7 no. 1 (2019), pp. 99–111.

Peter Mares, *Borderline: Australia's Treatment of Refugees and Asylum Seekers* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2001).

Pickenpaugh, Roger, *Captives in Blue: the Civil War Prisons of the Confederacy* (Tuscaloosa AL: University of Alabama Press, 2013).

Pickenpaugh, Roger, *Captives in Gray: the Civil War Prisons of the Union* (Tuscaloosa AL: University of Alabama Press, 2009).

Pitzer, Andrea, *One Long Night: a Global History of Concentration Camps* (New York NY: Little, Brown, 2017).

Pohlman, Annie, *Women, Sexual Violence and the Indonesian Killings of 1965–66* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015).

Roadnight, Andrew, 'Sleeping with the Enemy: Britain, Japanese Troops and the Netherlands East Indies, 1945–1946', *History* 87 issue 286 (2002), pp. 245–268.

Roberts, Sean R., *The War on the Uyghurs: China's Internal Campaign Against a Muslim Minority* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 2020).

Robinson, Greg, *By Order of the President: FDR and the Internment of Japanese Americans* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2003).

Rojek, Dean G., 'Social Control in the People's Republic of China', *Criminal Justice Review* 14 no. 2 (1989), pp. 141–153.

Scheipers, Sibylle (ed.), *Prisoners in War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

Schindler, Dietrich, and Jiří Toman (eds), *The Laws of Armed Conflicts: a Collection of Conventions, Resolutions, and Other Documents* (Dordrecht: Nijhoff, 3rd edn, 1988).

Seymour, James D., and Richard Anderson, *New Ghosts, Old Ghosts: Prisons and Labor Reform Camps in China* (Armonk NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1998).

Shiraishi, Takashi, 'The Phantom World of Digoel', *Indonesia* 61 (1996), pp. 93–118.

Smallman-Raynor, Matthew, and Andrew D. Cliff, 'The Geographical Transmission of Smallpox in the Franco-Prussian War: Prisoner of War Camps and their Impact upon Epidemic Diffusion Processes in the Civil Settlement System of Prussia, 1870–71', *Medical History* 46 (2002), pp. 241–264.

Wachsmann, Nikolaus, *KL: a History of the Nazi Concentration Camps* (New York NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2015).

Wallerstein, Immanuel, *World-Systems Analysis: an Introduction* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004).

Williams, Philip F., and Yenna Wu, *The Great Wall of Confinement: the Chinese Prison Camp Through Contemporary Fiction and Reportage* (Berkeley CA: University of California Press, 2004).

Yao, Souchou, *The Malayan Emergency: a Small, Distant War* (Copenhagen: NIAS Press, 2016).

Zevitz, Richard G., 'Camp Randall Military Prison: Confederate Prisoners of War in Madison, Wisconsin', *Criminal Justice Studies* 22 no. 1 (2009), pp. 91–102.

PART 1

Counterinsurgency

∴

CHAPTER 2

Reconcentration and the Camp System: The Legacy of the Philippine-American War

Christina Twomey

Abstract

During the Philippine-American War (1899–1902), the U.S. Army issued a series of 'reconcentration' orders designed to strangle support for guerrilla forces resistant to the imposition of U.S. colonial rule. The U.S. Army preferred to call the places in which it confined villagers and rural populations 'zones of protection', rather than camps. The zones had clearly demarcated boundaries and the movement of the inhabitants who lived within them was strictly controlled. Despite the contemporary controversy over these tactics, the American reconcentration policy in the Philippines is a little-studied aspect of that war. This chapter offers an analysis of reconcentration policy as it was practised in the Philippines. It also suggests that reconcentration extended beyond the formal period of the war and was incorporated into the administration of the islands. Some regions continued to be unsettled and the Philippines Commission passed an Act in 1903 to authorise provincial governors to reconcentrate particular populations. Rather than being a temporary measure used during a period of martial law, reconcentration was thereafter built into the governance structure of the Philippines.

Keywords

Reconcentration orders – concentration camps – Philippine-American War – the Philippines – anti-imperialism – counterinsurgency – detention camps

The relocation of populations to prevent their support of rebels and enemies had been a military practice for centuries, but it became a widespread response to colonial insurgencies in the 1890s. In places as diverse as South Africa, the Philippines and Cuba, the colonial power confined civilians in camps or fenced-off compounds, or within certain territorial limits, in order to deprive insurgents of support, especially in terms of food, supplies and

©

intelligence.[1] The military issued 'reconcentration orders' to effect the strategy, and the physical spaces that resulted were sometimes labelled 'concentration camps', especially by their critics. The least well-known, and certainly the least studied, of these reconcentrations was the one practised by the United States Army during the Philippine-American War (1899–1902). From 1901, in a series of reconcentration orders, the U.S. Army removed hundreds of thousands of Filipinos from their land or homes and detained them in *barrios* (rural villages or urban wards) or within specified spatial boundaries.

The Americans did not specifically create purpose-built camps, or ship in thousands of tents to accommodate displaced rural populations, as the British had done during the contemporaneous South African War (1899–1902). The U.S. Army was far more likely to describe its practice as creating 'zones of protection', or as 'reconcentrating' or 'garrisoning' segments of the population, although army officers and the U.S. government did often refer to the reconcentrated zones as 'camps' or 'concentration camps'. Reconcentration in the Philippines occurred in two phases: first, during the war in 1901–1902 and second, owing to the perceived efficacy of the wartime experiment, in subsequent years under the auspices of the Reconcentration Act of 1903. Drawing on U.S. Army archival records, Congressional papers, memoirs and contemporary pamphlets, this chapter analyses how the U.S. Army justified reconcentration in the Philippines as falling within the rules of law, the way reconcentration worked in practice, and the legacy of its ultimate incorporation into the governance structure of the Philippines in the early twentieth century.

The Spanish practice of reconcentration during the Cuban War of Independence (1895–1898) was, ostensibly, one of the major reasons that the U.S. decided in April 1898 to go to war against Spain, although recent historiography suggests that expansionist political motives were in fact more important.[2] When requesting the permission of Congress to declare war against Spain, U.S. President William McKinley asserted that the policies of devastation and

1 Sibylle Scheipers, 'The Use of Camps in Colonial Warfare', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 43:4 (2015), pp. 678–698; Jonathan Hyslop, 'The Invention of the Concentration Camp: Cuba, Southern Africa and the Philippines, 1896–1907', *South African Historical Journal*, 63:2 (2011), pp. 251–276; Iain R. Smith and Andreas Stucki, 'The Colonial Development of Concentration Camps', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 39:3 (2011), pp. 417–437.

2 A.G. Hopkins, *American Empire: A Global History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018), pp. 336–382; Louis A. Perez, Jr, 'Incurring a Debt of Gratitude: 1898 and the Moral Sources of United States Hegemony in Cuba', *American Historical Review*, 104:2 (April 1999), pp. 356–98.

reconcentration pursued by the Spanish in Cuba heralded 'a new and inhuman phase happily unprecedented in the modern history of civilized Christian peoples'. Reconcentration, he warned, 'was not civilized war; it was extermination'. It would not lead to peace: 'The only peace it could beget was the wilderness and the grave'.[3] At the turn of the twentieth century, at least in the United States, reconcentration was a tainted military strategy, yet within the space of a few years the U.S. Army would issue reconcentration orders of its own in the Philippines.[4]

1 The Philippines

The United States took possession of the Philippines as part of its peace settlement with Spain after the conclusion of the Spanish-American War in 1898. The U.S. soon encountered resistance to its assumption of control in the Philippines. A Spanish colony since the sixteenth century, the Philippines was already experiencing a vigorous Filipino independence movement. Filipino revolutionaries had declared the First Philippine Republic in 1898 upon the defeat of Spain, and were dismayed by the prospect of one colonial power replacing another. By 1899, there was armed conflict between the United States and the forces of the First Philippine Republic, especially near Manila, on the island of Luzon. A policy of 'benevolent assimilation', designed to persuade Filipinos of the benefits of American rule, soon gave way to harsher measures when opposition continued and Filipino forces increasingly resorted to guerilla warfare as the conflict spread to other provinces and islands.[5] An archipelago comprised of thousands of islands, with the largest and most populous typified by mountainous terrain, the Philippines did not produce easy victories for the U.S. Army. The three main island groups, Luzon, the Visayas and Mindanao, were the primary locations of resistance.[6] Even though President Theodore Roosevelt declared an official end to the insurrection in July 1902, sporadic conflict in this diverse territory continued for many years.

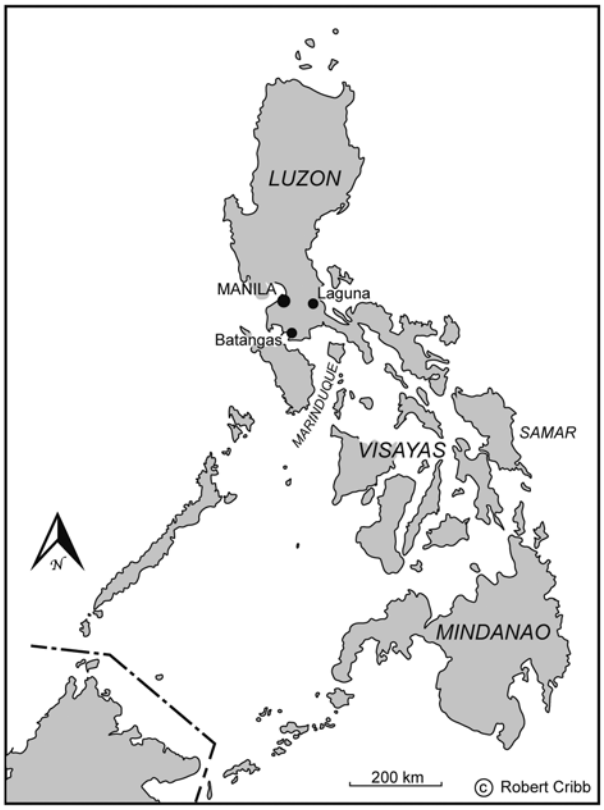
---

3 *Congressional Record 31 Cong. Rec. (1898) Senate*, 11 April 1898, p. 3699.

4 Andrew J. Birtle, 'The U.S. Army's Pacification of Marinduque, Philippine Islands, April 1900–April 1901', *Journal of Military History*, 61:2 (April 1997), p. 271.

5 Stuart Creighton Miller, *'Benevolent Assimilation': American Conquest of the Philippines, 1899–1903* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982).

6 Brian McAllister Linn, *The Philippine War 1899–1902* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2000), p. 199.



MAP 2.1
The Philippines

Martial law was the essential context in which district commanders of the U.S. Army issued reconcentration orders in the Philippines during the official period of conflict. *Instructions for the Government of the United States Army in the Field*, also known as the General Orders Number 100 or the Lieber Code, provided the explicit justification. The Military Governor of the Philippines, Major General Arthur MacArthur, declared martial law in December 1900 during a period of intensified Filipino resistance. He also applied General Orders Number 100, an 1863 U.S. Army military code developed during the U.S. Civil War to govern the behavior of soldiers in the field.[7] Although often associated with more humane treatment of prisoners of war and occupied populations, and opposition to slavery, General Orders Number 100 had been explicitly developed to deal with the complexities of guerilla warfare. It allowed for very stringent reprisals against people deemed to be unlawful combatants

7 Francis Lieber, *Instructions for the Government of Armies of the United States in the Field* [1863] (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1898); John Fabian Witt, *Lincoln's Code: the Laws of War in American History* (New York: Free Press, 2012).

and civilians who might support them.[8] Allowable reprisals included the destruction of property and the expulsion of noncombatants. The U.S. Army resorted to these measures during the Philippine conflict, citing its faith in the code's assertion: 'The more vigorously wars are pursued, the better it is for humanity. Sharp wars are brief'.[9] When distributing copies of General Orders Number 100 to their troops, military commanders recognised that their application represented a harsher prosecution of the war, 'a radical and drastic change of policy', as one put it.[10]

Reconcentration orders, and concentration camps, received no explicit mention in General Orders Number 100. Nevertheless, Elihu Root, the U.S. Secretary of War, insisted to the Senate in 1902 that reconcentration was 'in strict conformity with both the letter and spirit of these instructions'.[11] Senior figures in the Army were more explicit. They pointed to paragraph 15 of General Orders Number 100, which allowed 'all withholding of sustenance or means of life from the enemy', as providing the imprimatur to create concentration camps. According to such logic, concentration camps, which allowed the army to separate noncombatants from insurgents, feed the people thus contained and destroy foodstuffs outside the camp boundaries, were the means by which it was possible to deny sustenance to the enemy. Therefore the camps were allowable under the laws of war.[12]

2 Reconcentration in Practice, 1901–1902

With the country under martial law, U.S. Army district commanders could order reconcentration, either by telegraphic circular or through a verbal order. An early example occurred on the island of Marinduque, in southern Luzon.

---

8 Sibylle Scheipers, *Unlawful Combatants: A Genealogy of the Irregular Fighter* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), pp. 69–104.

9 Lieber, *Instructions for the Government of Armies*, article 29.

10 Stenographer's record of speech by General Bell, Batangas, 1 December 1901, in Captain M.F. Davis (comp.), *Telegraphic Circulars and General Orders, Regulating Campaign Against Insurgents and Proclamations and Circular Letters, Relating to Reconstruction after Close of War in the Provinces of Batangas, Laguna and Mindoro, Philippine Islands, Issued by Brigadier J. Franklin Bell, Commanding Brigade, From December 1st 1901 to December 1st 1902* (Batangas: Headquarters Third Separate Brigade, 1902), viii.

11 Secretary of War to President pro tempore of the United States Senate, 7 May 1902, in *Issuance of Certain Military Orders in the Philippines*, 57th Congress, 1st session, Senate, Doc. No. 347, p. 3.

12 *Affairs in the Philippine Islands. Hearings before the Committee on the Philippines of the United States Senate. April 10, 1902*, 57th Congress, 1st session, Serial Set vol. no. 4244, session vol. no. 25, S. Doc 331, Part 3, p. 2870.

In February 1901, Major Fred A. Smith distributed an order commanding all people on the island to live in five principal towns. The commanding officer of each town designated limits beyond which its occupants were not allowed to go. Anyone refusing to relocate to the towns was considered an insurgent and was liable to be killed.[13] Brigadier General Robert P. Hughes reported that in the first half of 1901, on Samar, part of the Visayas, the local people were given verbal instructions that it would be safer for them to relocate to U.S. Army stations in order to distinguish themselves from the insurgents. The people 'located themselves', in Hughes' words, and took an oath of allegiance to the U.S. 'They were not ordered to do so, nor was it required of them', Hughes reported, but 'a great many of them came in to different places on the island'. He estimated that by late 1901, up to 200,000 people were concentrated on Samar: 'We had the majority of the people on the island under our control and care. There is no doubt of that'.[14]

The Marinduque and Samar reconcentrations attracted little notice in the United States. A later reconcentration in southwestern Luzon, which commenced in December 1901, drew far greater attention, from both contemporaries and historians.[15] In order to crush resistance in southwestern Luzon, Major General Adna Chaffee appointed Brigadier General J. Franklin Bell, one of his most experienced and effective generals, to bring the district to heel. The timing of his decision to do so, at the peak of public disquiet about the conduct of the war in the Philippines in 1902, prompted Brigadier General Bell and the U.S. Army to collate his orders, memos and reports, thereby creating the best record of reconcentration policy, at least in its official articulation, during the war.[16]

The camps established at Luzon in 1901–1902 were observed at close quarters by people versed in the art and laws of war. At an earlier stage in his career Bell had been Professor of Military Science and Tactics at Southern Illinois Normal University and had pursued an academic interest in counterinsurgency and military tactics.[17] He was evidently inclined to document in meticulous detail

13 Fred A. Smith, Major, First United States Infantry, Commanding to Adjutant-General, Department of Southern Luzon, 3 March 1901, in ibid., pp. 2444–2445.

14 *Affairs in the Philippine Islands. Hearings before the Committee on the Philippines of the United States Senate. April 10, 1902*. 57th Congress, 1st session, Serial Set vol. no. 4242, session vol. no. 23, S. Doc 331, Part 1, p. 569.

15 Senator Culberson stated that Bell's reconcentration order was published in full in the *Washington Star*, 20 January 1902, in ibid., p. 78.

16 Davis (comp.), *Telegraphic Circulars and General Orders*.

17 Edgar F. Raines, 'Bell, James Franklin', *American National Biography Online*, February 2000. Accessed 28 January 2013.

the thinking behind his tactical decisions to reconcentrate the population in what he labelled 'zones of protection'. The consequences of Bell's tactics were observed *in situ* by Colonel Arthur L. Wagner, Assistant Adjutant General of the Department of the North Philippines. Wagner shared Bell's interest in military strategy and had been an instructor at the U.S. Infantry and Cavalry School for a decade prior to his posting to the Philippines. Described by his biographer as the army's 'chief spokesman on matters of tactic and doctrine' by the turn of the twentieth century, Wagner's opinion carried weight.[18] He believed that there were few men 'more brave or more humane' than Bell. He can hardly be considered a neutral observer, however: he and Bell had been friends for over twenty years.[19] Wagner thought that the U.S. Army had blundered through the islands like a 'blind giant' who was 'strong, but unable to see where to strike' because it was impossible to identify 'our friends from our enemies'.[20] Reconcentration made sense to him as a way to solve this problem.

The purpose of reconcentration was both military, to deprive the insurgents of sustenance, and strategic, to better distinguish between 'friends and enemies' by intimidating the local people into withdrawing their support for the insurgents and transferring their allegiance to the United States. Bell made clear his assumption that 'practically the whole population has been hostile to us at heart' and that the object of the reconcentration policy was 'to cause the people to change their minds and to conclude that it is best to help the government to put down this insurrection'.[21] Colonel Wagner, commenting on the strategy that motivated the formation of 'concentration camps', stated:

> The purpose was twofold. First, to protect these people, who had been compelled by the ladrones [brigands] to contribute food and money and who were constantly complaining to our authorities about the impositions to which they were subjected by these hostile people. Another reason was that we might get these people into these camps, where we could be sure of feeding them and at the same time sweeping up all the food supplies in the rest of the country, in order that these ladrones in the hills might be starved out.[22]

---

18 T.R. Brereton, *Educating the U.S. Army: Arthur L. Wagner and Reform, 1875–1905* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000), ix.

19 *Affairs in the Philippine Islands*, Part 3, p. 2864.

20 Ibid., pp. 2850–2851.

21 J.F. Bell, Telegraphic Circular No. 22, 24 Dec 1901, in Davis (comp.), *Telegraphic Circulars*, p. 21.

22 *Affairs in the Philippines Islands*, Part 3, p. 2850.

Senior figures in the army believed that the supply of income and food to the insurgents, when not given willingly by the populace, had been obtained through levies, intimidation and threats of assassination. Commanding General of the Department of the North Philippines Loyd Wheaton argued that 'the concentration was made for the purpose of protecting the natives from the guerilla bands in the provinces of Laguna and Batangas'.[23] The assumption that there was an element of compulsion in the support provided by locals to insurgents fostered the description of the reconcentrated areas as 'zones of protection' for people who wished to be shielded from the physical and social pressure to support the insurrection.

Station commanders were ordered to establish plainly marked limits around each town or nearby barrio, beyond which residents could not go, and to include some ground for stock grazing within their limits. In the case of Laguna and Batangas, the country was 'quite thickly settled', allowing authorities to create a series of camps corresponding to barrios and villages within the same municipal limits, sometimes only five miles apart but usually covering a radius of about ten miles.[24] The inhabitants were ordered to relocate within such limits 'with all their movable food supplies, including rice, palay [unhusked rice], chickens, live stock' by 25 December 1901; any property found outside the delineated zone would be liable to confiscation or destruction.[25] As the numbers of people congregating in the towns soared, Bell became cautious of the potential for his troops to be outnumbered, and issued a further order declaring that if the local people were to 'treacherously rise against the troops', the town would be 'completely destroyed by fire'.[26] People in the protected zones were required to be inside their habitations by 8 p.m. and to remain there until the following dawn.[27] No person was allowed to leave the 'protected zones' without a pass, especially able-bodied males 'except in the case of extreme necessity, and no pass will be given an able bodied male to go anywhere to do anything which a woman can do equally well'.[28] There was never an official tally kept of how many people resided within the zones, but

23 Major-General Commanding Loyd Wheaton, Department of North Philippines to Adjutant-General, Army, 24 March 1902 in *Issuance of Certain Military Orders in the Philippines*, p. 4.

24 *Affairs in the Philippines Islands*, Part 3, p. 2871.

25 J.F. Bell, Telegraphic Circular, 8 Dec 1901, in Davis (comp.), *Telegraphic Circulars and General Orders*, p. 2.

26 Bell, Telegraphic Circular No. 19, 21 Dec 1901, in ibid., p. 13.

27 Ibid., p. 18.

28 Ibid., p. 14.

Wagner concluded that at least 100,000 people in total were concentrated as a result of Bell's 1901 order.[29]

Able-bodied men found outside of the protected zone were to be arrested or confined or, if they ran away, shot. This was no idle threat; Filipinos discovered beyond the limits were arrested and tried by military Provost Courts, which during a time of war took the place of all minor courts of the country for trial of crimes and misdemeanors in general.[30] Penalties were severe, as was made clear by the case of Atanasio Bilila, arrested on 15 January 1902 at Tanauan, Batangas. Discovered 'out of limits in violation of existing orders' and in the vicinity of insurgents and their supplies, Bilila was charged with 'engaging in insurrection against the United States' and sentenced to two years' hard labour.[31] Juan Guevarra 'did fail to present himself in his barrio, Darasa, Tanauan, P.I [Philippine Islands], before January first, 1902, the expiration of the time limit for concentration' and was also sentenced to two years' hard labour.[32]

The preliminary arrangements for feeding such large numbers of people confined in relatively small spaces soon proved challenging, as did the prevention of disease.[33] Bell sought to prevent the outbreak of a smallpox epidemic by insisting on the compulsory vaccination of all people in protected zones 'till no unscratched arms remain'.[34] The army requisitioned food, and set price controls and purchase limits. Bell allowed work parties to depart the zones, under armed guard, to harvest any crops in the vicinity (regardless of who owned them), to take possession of any food supplies, and to plant new crops within the protected zones on any land that fell within them. Bell had no qualms about effectively levying contributions to the war effort from the local population, because he thought that most Filipinos had taken some role in assisting the insurrection, and they had therefore 'rendered themselves liable to being compelled to bear their share of the burden and hardship of a war for which they are directly responsible'.[35] The food thus collected was not to be

29 *Affairs in the Philippines Islands*, Part 3, p. 2873.

30 Judge Advocate, Department of North Philippines to Adjutant General, Department of North Philippines, 24 April 1902, (U.S.) National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland (hereafter NARA), RG395, E2635, Box 6, 7985.

31 Case No. 24, United States vs Atanasio Bilila, Provost Court of Tanauan, NARA, RG395, E5335, Box 1.

32 Case No. 15, United States vs Juan Guevarra, Provost Court of Tanauan, NARA, RG395, E5335, Box 1.

33 Bell, Telegraphic Circular No. 30, 23 Jan 1902, in Davis (comp.), *Telegraphic Circulars*, p. 26.

34 Major William Stephenson, Chief Surgeon, U.S. Army to All Station Commanders, Batangas and Laguna, 16 Jan 1902, in ibid., p. 33.

35 Bell, Telegraphic Circular No. 30, 23 Jan 1902, in ibid., p. 26.

distributed as charity; able-bodied men and women and children over twelve years of age were required to work on roads, bridges or other utilities in return for rations. 'The common people on these Islands easily become pauperized', Bell insisted, and it was important for the government to send a message that they were not encouraging idleness.[36] The Chief Commissar of the Division of the Philippines, who visited the camps in Batangas and Laguna, considered them so well run that 'instead of being called "camps of concentration" the proper name would be "camps of instruction and sanitation"'.[37]

Empirical evidence about the extent and impact of reconcentration orders issued in the wake of martial law in the Philippines is piecemeal and uneven.[38] Colonel Wagner conducted an inspection of 'the concentration camps of the natives' in March 1902 and provided one of the few recorded descriptions of them. Each camp was laid out in streets, with the residents of outside barrios being relocated to particular sections, in order that neighbours and communities were not separated from each other, even if they were now more crowded together. Pigs and chickens grazed within camp boundaries. There was an outpost marked with a flag on the 'dead line' of each camp, staffed by four Filipinos, who were charged with warning people not to go beyond the line on pain of death.[39]

Mortality rates in the reconcentrated zones are disputed. Glenn A. May's study of the records of two parishes in Batangas, between January and April 1902, concluded that thousands more people died in the period than would normally have been the case, and that most of them died from 'fever'. Taking the example of Batangas City, where 30,000 people resided in an area that usually housed 3,000, May argues that overcrowding, unsanitary conditions and shortages of food increased the incidence of measles, typhoid, influenza and other viruses. In the province overall, he estimates approximately 11,000 people died as a consequence of reconcentration. Moreover, the diseases which flourished in unhealthy conditions, such as cholera, continued to wreak havoc after the official period of reconcentration had ended. The destruction of crops also led to widespread food shortages.[40]

---

36 Bell, Telegraphic Circular No. 31, 26 Jan 1902, in ibid., p. 28.

37 *Issuance of Certain Military Orders in the Philippines*, p. 5.

38 See Brian McAllister Linn, *The U.S. Army and Counterinsurgency in the Philippine War, 1899–1902* (Chapel Hill: University of North Caroline Press, 1989), pp. 154–161; Birtle, 'The U.S. Army's Pacification of Marinduque'; Glenn A. May, *Battle for Batangas: A Philippine Province at War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991); Glenn A. May, 'The "Zones" of Batangas', *Philippine Studies*, 29:1 (1981), p. 94.

39 Colonel Arthur L. Wagner to Major General Loyd Wheaton, Headquarters Department of North Philippines, 22 March 1902, NARA, RG395, E2635, Box 6, 7888.

40 May, 'The "Zones" of Batangas', pp. 98–100.

All camp inmates had been vaccinated against smallpox.[41] The camp at Santo Tomas, covering an area two miles long and one mile wide, contained 8,000 people. At Tanauan there were two camps totaling almost 20,000 people: 'North town', which was approximately one-third of a square mile, and 'South Town', half a mile long and one-third of a mile wide. There had been considerable sickness at Tanauan, with epidemics of measles and pneumonia, particularly among the children. Wagner put this down to an unseasonal cool period, arguing that the death rates were little higher than normal in the region.[42]

Wagner was concerned to present the camps as satisfactory. He insisted that the American treatment of the Filipinos was far superior to the Spanish treatment of the Cuban *reconcentrados* in the earlier period. The fundamental difference was that while the Filipinos received food and medical care from the Americans, the Cuban *reconcentrados* had been starved by the Spanish. The two approaches were so dissimilar that any comparison was akin to 'comparing mercy with cruelty'.[43] Considering that the '*hombres* or common people' had 'scarcely more power of intelligent initiative than the same number of cattle', Wagner found them perfectly contented; he speculated that they would probably be unwilling to leave once hostilities had ended.[44] The same could not be said of the camp's wealthier residents, who had been forced to abandon their estates and orange crops, and found association with the 'democratic herd' distasteful. 'It is but just that the pinch of concentration should be felt by them', Wagner insisted, because they had financed and sustained the insurrection.[45] Even though Bell's order stated that reconcentration was designed to protect the poor from the levies that insurgents made upon them to support the insurrection, Wagner's report made clear that at least part of the purpose was to break the will of the rich to support the rebels.

U.S. acquisition of the Philippines and the U.S. transition to imperial power were controversial in a nation that prided itself on republicanism and opposition to colonial rule. There was a vocal minority of anti-imperialists, both within the U.S. Congress and in the broader public. When Lieutenant General Nelson A. Miles conducted a tour of the Philippines in early 1903, he confirmed that 'the country appeared devastated and … the people were very much

41 Major William Stephenson, Chief Surgeon, US Army to All Station Commanders, Batangas and Laguna, 16 Jan 1902 in Davis, *Telegraphic Circulars*, p. 33.

42 Wagner to Wheaton, 22 March 1902.

43 *Affairs in the Philippines Islands*, Part 3, p. 2852.

44 This sentiment was echoed in Edgar G. Bellairs, *As it is in the Philippines* (New York: Lewis, Scribner and Co., 1902), p. 89 and in the report of a visit to Binan, Calamba, Santo Tomas, Tanauan and Lipa by the Chief Commissary of the Division of the Philippines in March 1902 (*Issuance of Certain Military Orders in the Philippines*, p. 5).

45 Wagner to Wheaton, 22 March 1902.

depressed'.[46] Miles concluded that the policies of reconcentration had led to widespread distress and famine in Luzon. In order to broker the tensions engendered by opposition to reconcentration, the government had established the U.S. Senate Committee on the Philippines, albeit with pro-imperialist Henry Cabot Lodge as its chairman. In light of extensive publicity given to soldiers' letters home, which detailed atrocities against a foe often cast in racially derogatory terms, the Lodge Committee investigated war crimes by U.S. troops in 1902.[47] Reconcentration was included in its brief. The published proceedings of the hearings, which ran to thousands of pages, included no covering report or conclusions.[48] Lodge successfully channelled allegations of war crimes into the non-public Committee on Territories, and senior army figures and even President Roosevelt himself defended the legitimacy and necessity of tactics like reconcentration.[49]

Many non-military observers supported Wagner's report that the conditions of concentration during the war in the Philippines were benign in comparison with the fate of the *reconcentrados* in Cuba, the touchpoint in any contemporary discussion. Burlingame Johnson, former U.S. Consul at Amoy in China, declared that concentration as it was practised in the Philippines 'had no element of cruelty in it' and that most ordinary people considered it a 'relief instead of a punishment' because it protected them from making forced contributions to the insurgent cause.[50] In a similar vein, David Prescott Barrows, an anthropologist who had been appointed as Chief of the Bureau of Non-Christian Tribes in the Philippines, found that what he called the 'reconcentrado provinces' were nothing like the wasteland that their critics described.

> I think the matter has been very greatly misunderstood. In this case the population was in no sense confined within barriers inimical to its well-being. There was no barbed-wire fence business at all. They were simply required to dwell and to work along a great cultivated stretch which made up the arable land of the province, within a certain distance of a military road that traversed it. They had to stay there. They could not go out to the mountains. They could not take to the woods. Of course within those limits they could pass, and pass for miles; harvest their rice;

46 'Miles Report Made Public', *Evening Times – Republican*, 27 April 1903, p. 1.

47 Paul Kramer, *The Blood of Government: Race, Empire, the United States and the Philippines* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), pp. 145–147.

48 *Affairs in the Philippine Islands*. Parts 1 and 3 already cited; Part 2 at Serial Set vol. no. 4243, session vol. no. 24, S. Doc 331.

49 Kramer, *Blood of Government*, p. 146.

50 *Affairs in the Philippines Islands*, Part 1, p. 665.

> fish; do anything they wanted to do; but they must stay in the territory capable of patrol by military forces.[51]

Effectively a government employee himself, Barrows fully supported the official view that in the Philippines there had 'never been any thought of establishing "concentration camps" in the ordinary acceptation of the term'.[52]

The U.S. Army remained unrepentant about its implementation and legitimation of reconcentration policies, largely because they were so effective. By March 1902, Major General Wheaton reported that in Laguna and Batangas the army had captured almost every weapon possessed by the guerillas and that the resistance had been broken.[53] Bell secured the surrender of notorious guerilla leader Miguel Malvar by April 1902, and the province was thenceforth considered 'pacified' and the reconcentration measures relaxed. Malvar himself confessed that the reconcentration measures had hastened his surrender.[54] In testimony before the Lodge Committee, Colonel Wagner emphasised that most reconcentrations did not last longer than five months, because in most cases by that time the support base for the insurgents had been strangled.[55]

The most searing condemnation of U.S. policy in the Philippines came from critics who drew attention to the counter-insurgency measures *outside* the camps and their more deleterious, longer-term consequences for the Filipino people and nation. Bell's reconcentration order had been accompanied by instructions to search every ravine, valley and mountain peak and destroy everything outside of the towns. Senator Augustus Bacon, a lawyer and former confederate soldier, was one critic who focused on policy outside the camps. It is often noted that Bacon cited a letter on the floor of the U.S. Congress from an American officer in the Philippines, who described the 'reconcentrado pen' he encountered as a 'little spot of black sogginess' overwhelmed by the smell of death. Yet Bacon believed that the 'reconcentrado camps' were the only form of shelter in a sea of devastation. For Bacon, the inmates of the camps were comparatively safe; the reconcentration order effectively protected those within, and destroyed life, food and property without:

---

51 Ibid., p. 717.

52 'Truth Has Been Told: Gov. Taft Says there are no Secrets in Philippines', *Washington Post*, 27 January 1902, p. 3.

53 Loyd Wheaton, Major-General Commanding, Department of North Philippines to Adjutant-General of the Army, 24 March 1902, in *Issuance of Certain Military Orders in the Philippines*, p. 24.

54 Linn, *The U.S. Army and Counterinsurgency*, p. 159.

55 *Affairs in the Philippines Islands*, Part 3, p. 2862.

> [L]ife is unsafe out of them; because life is almost certain to be sacrificed out of them; because all property left outside is to be destroyed; because all houses are to be burned; because the country is to be made a desert waste; because within a camp is a zone of life and without a camp is a widespread area of death and desolation. This is what a reconcentrado camp means.[56]

3 The Utility of Reconcentration

While reconcentration was a wartime tactic, it had a much longer history in the years thereafter. Even after a formal end to the war had been declared in July 1902, particular pockets of resistance dragged on for many years. The Philippines Commission, appointed to transition the country from military to civilian rule, passed the Reconcentration Act in 1903 to authorise provincial governors to 'withdraw the outlying barrios (villages) of the towns to their respective centers of population and in a sense to reconcentrate the residents of the outlying barrios'.[57] Rather than the U.S. Army enforcing reconcentration orders, they were now carried out by local constabularies. The Act was justified by the 'peculiar character of the country' and the capacity of people now designated as *ladrones* (brigands) to disrupt the proper functioning of a district. Reconcentration was still being practised as late as 1907.[58] During cholera epidemics in the Philippines in the early twentieth century, the U.S. authorities also burnt down entire villages and urban areas and reconcentrated the population in camps. Rather than being a temporary measure utilised during a period of martial law, reconcentration had been built into the governance structures of the Philippines.

The Filipino people themselves objected to the constant resort to reconcentration orders. As one newspaper put it in 1905: the ordinances fell 'like a pestilence on the unfortunate people'. The article continued, 'We say frankly and with deep sorrow that this measure which causes so much suffering is not justified … There are created by it feelings of animosity and rancour that

56 Ibid.

57 Philippines Commission, No. 781, Exhibit A, in United States, War Department, *Annual Reports of the War Department for the Fiscal Year ended June 30, 1903. Volume V. Report of the Philippine Commission* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1903), pp. 140–141. For comments on reconcentration policy see ibid., pp. 31–34.

58 Birtle, 'The U.S. Army's Pacification of Marinduque', p. 281.

will not be forgotten for many years – perhaps never'.[59] In 1905, one Filipino, Felix Barcelon, applied for a writ of *habeas corpus*, arguing that his detention under reconcentration orders was illegal. In his case, the Supreme Court of the Philippines found that it had been within the Governor-General's right to suspend *habeas corpus*.[60] The point here is less about the legal and constitutional reasons for the court's finding against Barcelon, and more that his case is evidence of continued resistance to the practice of reconcentration.

The U.S. Anti-Imperialist League also continued to send out its representatives to the Philippines to report on reconcentration. Helen Wilson published a pamphlet in 1906 that detailed the loss of population in reconcentrated zones, and the ongoing impact on agricultural production and the loss of livestock in affected areas. Wilson described a number of camps she visited outside of Manila as miserable affairs, where people remained at the mercy of the constabulary and were susceptible to infection and disease. Clearly critical of the continued use of such a policy, Wilson was also concerned to reassure the American public that the camps contained nothing like the misery and suffering associated with the Spanish *reconcentrado* camps in Cuba. Her concern lay more with the potential for laziness and immorality that came with reconcentration, which, she wrote, 'increases the number of the idle and destitute, makes more difficult of solution the already acute labour problem, and lowers the efficiency and moral standards of the people'.[61]

4 Conclusion

The paucity of information that the U.S. Army and government released about reconcentration in the Philippines formed a stark contrast to the British response to the concentration camps they had created in South Africa around the same time. Controversy over the British camps prompted a dedicated parliamentary Commission of Inquiry and, ultimately, rigorous reporting and

59 'La Concentración en Kabite', *El Ranacimiento*, 30 June 1905, p. 1, online source 'Filipinos Object to Reconcentration', available at https://herb.ashp.cuny.edu/items/show/907. Accessed 20 April 2020.

60 Felix Barcelon vs David J. Baker, Jr and John Doe Thompson, *G. R. No. 2808*, September 30, 1905, Republic of the Philippines, Supreme Court, Manila. available online at https://www.lawphil.net/judjuris/juri1905/sep1905/gr_2808_1905.html. Accessed 20 April 2020.

61 Helen Calista Wilson, *Reconcentration in the Philippines and Statistical Table* (Boston: Anti-Imperialist League, c. 1906), p. 11.

accounting procedures.[62] Outrage over the detention of white women and children, in particular, was enormous – both in Britain and on the European continent – and very soon the camps transferred from military to civilian control. Nothing similar occurred in the Philippines, where the reconcentrated inhabitants were all native Filipinos, the reconcentration zones remained under army control, there was no centralised reporting on the practice and there was very little accounting of the measures to Congress or the American public.[63]

Secretary of War Elihu Root's attitude was that the U.S. Army was the best judge of the military requirements in the Philippines and he was uninterested in entering into detailed correspondence about concentration with Congressmen, members of the public, or anyone else. The relative weakness of the anti-imperial lobby in the United States, the U.S. Army's strict control of the information flow and the non-European subjects of reconcentration meant that their fate did not become the subject of major intervention efforts.

While reconcentration in the Philippines may not have prompted an international outcry, it did reveal the significance of the application of General Orders Number 100 for the legitimation of camps as a counterinsurgency tactic. Confirmation of this came in the early twentieth century, when the U.S. Federal Government established a Spanish Claims Commission which ran until 1907. The commission considered the claims of U.S. citizens for compensation for the loss or destruction of their property during the 1898 war between the U.S. and Spain. It seems a most unlikely source for the clearest articulation of the U.S. government's position on the use of reconcentration as a strategy of war, but several of the commissioners were anti-imperialists, and they were keen to push the government on the apparent contradiction between President McKinley's 1898 declaration that reconcentration was 'uncivilized warfare' and the U.S. Army's use of reconcentration policies in the Philippines. Their comments highlighted the fact that the denial of political legitimacy to guerrilla fighters licensed a punitive approach to 'civilian' populations suspected of harbouring sympathy for them. All of the international legal authorities the Commissioners consulted made it abundantly clear that there were relatively weak protections for non-combatants at international law, and concentration or detention camps fell within the realms of legally acceptable treatment for potentially hostile populations.[64] They still do. While protection for civilians

62 Concentration Camps Commission, *Report on the Concentration Camps in South Africa* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1902). Cd 893.

63 See examples of correspondence in NARA, RG 94, Entry 25, Adjutant General's Office Document File # 415839.

64 Department of Justice, Spanish Treaty Claims Commission, *Special Report of William E. Fuller, Assistant Attorney General, Being a Condensed Statement of the Work Done, the Questions Considered, the Principles Laid Down, and the Most Important Decisions made by the*

at international law increased after 1945, the concept of concentration or the camp itself was regulated rather than altogether removed. States such as the U.S. recognised the utility of reconcentration, and camps, for security more generally, and ultimately legitimated them by incorporating them into governance structures, both at home and abroad.

References

Bellairs, Edgar G., *As it is in the Philippines* (New York: Lewis, Scribner and Co., 1902).

Birtle, Andrew J., 'The US Army's Pacification of Marinduque, Philippine Islands, April 1900-April 1901', *Journal of Military History*, 61:2, April 1997, pp. 255–282.

Brereton, T.R., *Educating the US Army: Arthur L. Wagner and Reform, 1875–1905* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000), p. ix.

Davis, M.R. (comp.), *Telegraphic Circulars and General Orders, Regulating Campaign Against Insurgents and Proclamations and Circular Letters, Relating to Reconstruction after Close of War in the Provinces of Batangas, Laguna and Mindoro, Philippine Islands, Issued by Brigadier J. Franklin Bell, Commanding Brigade, From December 1st 1901 to December 1st 1902* (Batangas: Headquarters Third Separate Brigade, 1902).

'Filipinos Object to Reconcentration', online source available at https://herb.ashp.cuny.edu/items/show/907.

Hopkins, A.G., *American Empire: A Global History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018).

Hyslop, Jonathan, 'The Invention of the Concentration Camp: Cuba, Southern Africa and the Philippines, 1896–1907', *South African Historical Journal*, 63:2 (2011), pp. 251–276.

Kramer, Paul, *The Blood of Government: Race, Empire, the United States and the Philippines* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006).

Lieber, Francis, *Instructions for the Government of Armies of the United States in the Field* [1863] (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1898).

Linn, Brian McAllister, *The Philippine War 1899–1902* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2000).

Linn, Brian McAllister, *The U.S. Army and Counterinsurgency in the Philippine War, 1899–1902* (Chapel Hill: University of North Caroline Press, 1989).

May, Glenn A., *Battle for Batangas: A Philippine Province at War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991).

May, Glenn A., 'The "Zones" of Batangas', *Philippine Studies*, 29:1 (1981), pp. 89–103.

Miller, Stuart Creighton, *'Benevolent Assimilation': American Conquest of the Philippines, 1899–1903* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982).

Spanish Treaty Claims Commission from the Organization of the Commission, April 8, 1901 to April 10, 1907 (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1907), pp. 222–275.

Perez, Louis A. Jr, 'Incurring a Debt of Gratitude: 1898 and the Moral Sources of United States Hegemony in Cuba', *American Historical Review*, 104:2 (April 1999), pp. 356–398.

Raines, Edgar F., 'Bell, James Franklin', *American National Biography Online*, February 2000.

Scheipers, Sibylle, *Unlawful Combatants: A Genealogy of the Irregular Fighter* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

Scheipers, Sibylle, 'The Use of Camps in Colonial Warfare', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 43:4 (2015), pp. 678–698.

Smith, Iain R. and Andreas Stucki, 'The Colonial Development of Concentration Camps', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 39:3 (2011), pp. 417–437.

United States, Department of Justice, Spanish Treaty Claims Commission, *Special Report of William E. Fuller, Assistant Attorney General, Being a Condensed Statement of the Work Done, the Questions Considered, the Principles Laid Down, and the Most Important Decisions made by the Spanish Treaty Claims Commission from the Organization of the Commission, April 8, 1901 to April 10, 1907* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1907).

United States, War Department, *Annual Reports of the War Department for the Fiscal Year ended June 30, 1903. Volume V. Report of the Philippine Commission*. (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1903).

Wilson, Helen Calista, *Reconcentration in the Philippines and Statistical Table* (Boston: Anti-Imperialist League, c. 1906).

Witt, John Fabian, *Lincoln's Code: the Laws of War in American History* (New York: Free Press, 2012).

CHAPTER 3

Detention in Malaya, 1948–1960: Spatial Segregation and Reintegration Techniques

Karl Hack

Abstract

This chapter argues that resettlement, detention camps, rehabilitation, and deportation need to be seen as elements of an integrated British counter-insurgency strategy in late colonial Malaya. In each case, the emphasis was on more than mere 'detention' or removal. Detention camps, for instance, were also places for segregating, sorting, rehabilitating, and beginning release processes. By contrast, New Villages, were attempts to protect and control rural dwellers. Residents were treated more harshly when perceived as supporting insurgents, but the authorities balanced coercion with promised better treatment if information was forthcoming, and the gradual development of New Villages. Overall, then, 'detention camps' need to be seen both as just one form of population segregation, and the act of 'detention' as one part of a variegated processes allowing for segregation, control and influence.

Keywords

Malaya – deportation – resettlement – New Village – rehabilitation – detention camps

Between 1948 and 1960, British-led security forces of the Federation of Malaya fought a war against guerrillas led by the Malayan Communist Party. The conflict was known as the Malayan Emergency. During the first two years of the war (1948–1949), British led-forces adopted a strategy characterised as 'counter-terror', in which they directly targeted communist units and activists by means of arrests and other security actions. From 1950 to 1952, these actions were supplemented by a massive program of population control, in which more than a million people were moved into various forms of fenced settlements with the aim of preventing them from supplying goods, support and information to the guerrillas. These measures, in conjunction with military

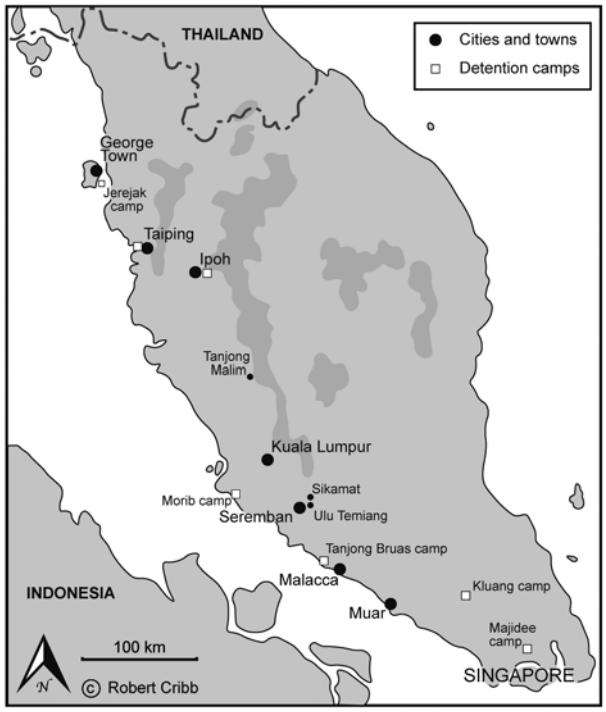
©

operations, led to British victory in the conflict by the end of 1952, though hostilities continued on a lesser scale until 1960. Forms of detention varied in character: some facilities were formal detention camps; some were created by regrouping huts to provide protection; still others were the new and permanent settlements known as 'New Villages'.

Population control was central to British strategy in the Malayan Emergency from 1950 to 1952.[1] During this period, the population of the Federation of Malaya was around 5 to 6 million people. Of these, about 1.1 million were required to move. About 0.5 million people were permanently resettled while 0.6 million were 'regrouped' (that is, their dwellings were moved closer together). In addition, more than 42,000 were held in formal detention and about 30,000 deported (though there was overlap between these two categories). In this program of population control, a chaotic early approach gave way to more careful targeting and to a combination of control, threat, and reward. Population control provided the essential context for effective counter-insurgency operations, which helped to reverse insurgent fortunes during 1951 and 1952. The number of security incidents fell by more than half in 1952, as insurgents were forced to put more effort into supply and political work. By 1960, the insurgents had been reduced to a rump force at the Thai border, the vast majority of the detainees had been released, and what had started, in 1950–1951, as crude civilian resettlements behind barbed wire were transforming into viable 'New Village' communities. The latter increasingly had title to land, and most of them had access to more facilities (community halls, medical help, and schools) than they had had before resettlement.

The background to the Emergency lay both in the racial politics of British Malaya and in the colony's economic structure. At the end of the Second World War, around 45% of the population of British Malaya (including Singapore) was ethnically Chinese. This Chinese population included both long-term settlers, whose primary connections were local, and sojourners, who intended to return China in due course. In 1946, in preparation for decolonisation, British authorities created the Malayan Union, which excluded predominantly Chinese Singapore but otherwise foreshadowed similar political rights for all residents of the rest of British Malaya, regardless of their ethnicity. Malay nationalist groups had objected to this arrangement, and British planners accommodated those objections by replacing the Malayan Union with the Federation of Malaya, in which access to citizenship for non-Malays was restricted. In these circumstances, the Malayan Communist Party presented itself as a defender of the political rights of Chinese residents. During the Second World War, the

1 Karl Hack, 'The Malayan Emergency as Counter-Insurgency Paradigm', *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 32 no. 3 (2009), pp. 383–414.



MAP 3.1
Malaya

party had carried out an armed struggle against Japanese occupation forces, using jungle and mountain bases and relying on Chinese communities for recruits, supplies and information. After 1943, the party received training and supplies from British sources. Among Chinese residents, the communist guerrillas gained heroic status. In the years immediately after the Second World War (1946–1948), the Malayan Communist Party had turned to labour union organisation and political work. In March 1948, however, the party decided that British restrictions and lack of progress towards decolonisation demanded a graduated return to violence.

In the post-war years, many Chinese lived in poverty in rural areas. About 500,000 rural 'squatters', most of them Chinese, resided along the fringe of the main, jungle-clad range which ran along the Malay Peninsula from north to south. Before the war, these squatters had cultivated land on the jungle edges while providing a reserve labour pool for tin mines and rubber plantations. During the war, many Chinese residents had fled the cities, where goods were scarce and they faced harsh Japanese repression, greatly expanding the number of squatters.[2] The Chinese squatter settlements had few facilities and the

2 Kevin Blackburn and Karl Hack, *War Memory and the Making of Modern Malaysia and Singapore* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2012), pp. 96–7, 112–121, 135–42.

people there had no title to the land on which they lived. The communist party's promise of radical social change appealed strongly to some of these Chinese people. The population of the Federation at the time of its creation (thus excluding Singapore) was about 49% Malay (a category that included other Southeast Asian ethnic groups such as Minangkabau and Javanese), 38% Chinese, 11% Indians and 2% others.[3] These percentages meant that in 1953 there were around 2.15 million Chinese in Malaya, out of a total population of 5.73 million. Discontent among Chinese residents therefore was a major security problem for the British authorities.

By no means the whole of the Chinese population supported the Malayan Communist Party. The Chinese business community was politically conservative, and the anti-communist Nationalist Party (Kuomintang) also had strong support. Many Chinese people, moreover, were keen not to commit to either side while the conflict was under way, for fear of later reprisals. The British authorities categorised this group as 'fence-sitters'. Membership of the Malayan Communist Party and its allied organisations was about 90% Chinese. Relatively few Malays joined the movement, partly because the Malayan Communist Party was widely seen as an organisation promoting Chinese interests at the expense of Malays, partly because Malay identity was closely bound up with traditionalist Islam: to many Malays, the communists were godless modernisers. The few Malays and Indians who joined the movement had generally been involved previously in left-wing or union work, or saw an alliance with the communists as a means of accelerating the removal of British rule.

In early 1948, the party began a campaign involving the killing of labour contractors, managers and Kuomintang supporters. In response, the British authorities declared a state of emergency in June 1948. The Malayan Communist Party then called up guerrilla fighters to launch an armed struggle that numbered around 2,000–3,000 fighters in 1948. It was officially entitled the Malayan National Liberation Army from February 1949. Insurgent numbers peaked at approximately 8,000 in 1951, and then fell steadily. According to one 1950 source, the guerrilla army comprised about 10% communist 'hard-core' activists, 20% former wartime guerrillas, and up to 70% new recruits.[4] The latter were drawn mainly from squatter, rubber-tapping and mining areas, and included 'refugees' from squatter settlements and rural villages who feared arrest or other forms of pressure by the British authorities. Among the recruits was a sprinkling of more educated people, union activists and political organisers.

3 *Annual Report on the Federation of Malaya: 1951* (Kuala Lumpur: Federal Printers, 1952).

4 Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore (hereafter ISEAS): H. S. Lee Papers 24.30, Tan Chin Siong to Tan Cheng Lock, received May 1950.

The key factor enabling Malayan National Liberation Army military operations was the support it received from rural Chinese rubber tappers, mine workers, squatters and farmers, organised by the Mass Organisation (Min Yuen).[5] In this early period, the communist guerrillas not only obtained supplies from rural villages, but sometimes slept and held meetings there. Guerrillas and villagers were linked by kinship, friendship, work connections, and admiration of the Malayan Communist Party's wartime resistance and post-war union work. As late as 1949 the security forces regarded some villages as, in effect, Malayan National Liberation Army base areas. Villagers might be spies, couriers, suppliers, sentries or subscription collectors, or relatives of those in the hills. In these circumstances, identifying communist supporters in the squatter settlements was a very difficult task for the British security forces.

Malaya's geography also made counter-insurgency operations difficult. A range of mountains ran most of the length of the peninsula, covered in jungle. This zone provided harbour for guerrillas, but not sufficient sustenance. Along the edge of the jungle, however, especially on the western side of the mountains, were the squatter settlements, along with some more established rural settlements. Closer to the coast was a strip of land containing plantations and mines. Finally, the coastal zone featured good roads, moderate sized towns, and more plantations and farming. Each zone was narrow, and it could be as little as a day's walk or cycle to get from jungle to a coastal town.

The key strategic innovation of the British forces in the second phase of the Emergency, from 1950, was to break the connection between the population of the squatter settlements and the guerrillas in the jungle by moving the squatters into new, closely monitored camps, rebranded as 'New Villages' in 1952. Detention camps in the strict sense of the word were only one part of the British mechanism that segregated the population from the guerrillas. To encompass the full range of segregation tools, I use the term 'spatial segregation infrastructure', which encompasses prisons, 'detention camps', 'resettlement areas', regroupments (labour lines which were concentrated and protected around an existing cluster of buildings), and even the 'deportation apparatus', including designated camps and ships. There was also a spectrum of detention 'instruments', from local limits on behaviour such as curfews or orders of restricted residence, through removal and restriction in a camp, to banishment (deportation from Malaya). Detention, moreover, was not just a set of places and rules but also a changing set of processes in which people were segregated, held, assessed and sorted, in order that the government could

5 Karl Hack, 'Detention, Deportation and Resettlement: British Counterinsurgency and Malaya's Rural Chinese, 1948–60', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 43 no. 4 (2015), pp. 611–640, esp. pp. 612–614.

then choose who would be killed (in government parlance, 'executed'), who would be released and who deported. The British detention system in Malaya was distinctive because it soon adopted a model of rehabilitation and return to normality.

1 Emergency Regulations and Processes

During its first weeks in June 1948, the state of emergency rested on powers derived from the British Military Administration that had governed the colony from the Japanese surrender in 1945 until April 1946. In July 1948 the Legislative Council passed the Emergency Regulations Ordinance, Section 4 of which empowered the High Commissioner to make regulations in the public interest. These 'Emergency Regulations' became the basis for population control.[6] The regulations allowed any police officer or serviceman of warrant officer rank or above to arrest people without warrant, as well as to search buildings and to detain vehicles. They provided for identification cards to be issued to everyone twelve years of age and older. The comprehensive issue of identity cards was completed over several months. In conjunction with the use of surrendered or turned communists and supporters to assist screening, the identity cards made possible the identification of communist supporters. Powers of arrest without warrant authorised rapid detention. A detention order under Emergency Regulation 24 (1) allowed initial arrest for up to twenty-eight days, during which a detention order under Emergency Regulation 17(1) could be drawn up, allowing for detention without trial for up to two years. A 1950 amendment allowed the Chief Secretary to extend detention periods, in effect authorising indefinite detention.[7]

The rules echoed the UK's Regulation 18B of the Defence (General) Regulations 1939. Like the British ones, Malaya's July 1948 detention rules provided some safeguards. A detainee had the right to lodge an objection to detention, which would be heard by an Advisory Committee, whose advice then went to the High Commissioner in Executive Council. Detainees were also entitled to a review at eighteen months, and could separately make complaints about treatment.

In Operation Frustration, carried out on the night of 20–21 July 1948, British security forces arrested several hundred members of the Malayan Communist

6 Rhoderick Dhu Renick, Jr, 'The Emergency Regulations of Malaya: Causes and Effect', *Journal of Southeast Asian History*, 6 no. 2 (1965), p. 19.

7 Hack, 'Detention', p. 617. Except where otherwise specified, Hack, 'Detention' is the source for all detail on detention camps, resettlement, and deportation.

Party and the radical Malay National Party (Parti Kebangsaan Melayu Malaya), as well as members of associated organisations. During seven months in 1948, the British authorities issued 5,958 detention orders, and only 645 orders for release. Since most actual insurgents who were 'eliminated' (in official parlance) were killed in fighting, and only smaller numbers captured and surrendered, the majority of detainees were suppliers (willing and unwilling), couriers, subscription collectors, spies, Mass Organisation leaders and other supporters. Individual detention was, however, soon deemed to be insufficient by itself, especially as the Advisory Committees faced an unmanageable flood of objections. By late 1948, moreover, the security forces wanted to be able to remove entire settlements if they judged those communities to be communist base areas. This measure was intended to hit directly at the insurgents, and to have a demonstration effect on other villagers, encouraging them to move away from 'bandit'- dominated areas, or to limit their support for the communists if they remained in place. To this end the government issued Emergency Regulation 17D in January 1949, authorising the collective detention of communities identified by the security forces as supporting the insurgents, or withholding information or assistance from the government. Article 17D did not provide for any right to lodge an objection.

Under Emergency Regulation 17D, the British authorities added over 6,300 detainees to detention camps between January and October 1949, as sixteen operations swept up several hundred villagers at a time. This figure was nearly twice the number of people held in 1949 using individual detention orders. After this initial surge of activity, however, Emergency Regulation 17D was used only three more times up to 1952; the regulation was abolished in March 1953.

The extensive individual and collective arrests of 1949, however, left the British authorities with the problem of how to deal with rapidly swelling detainee numbers. Despite six new camps being opened in 1948–1949, the authorities feared that the camps would fill up and that the premature release of detainees would cause alarm in the broader community. There was also some fear that insurgents might stage breakouts. In response, the colonial government developed several tools to screen the detainees in order to determine which of them could be released safely. To avoid generating new hostility to British rule, they wanted to get the innocent, the small players, and the intimidated out of detention as quickly as possible. The Advisory Committees that had been established to review objections to detention orders were replaced in March 1949 with Committees of Review. All committees included at least one member with judicial experience; they were given executive power to order continued detention, rehabilitation, or release (conditional or not). Releases were frequently made with a bond for good behaviour, which might involve relatives, friends or employers pledging property, and often specified

how someone would be employed and where they would reside. In 1949, a new Emergency Regulations article 17F gave the committees power to order 'restricted residence', that is, to require a released detainee to live in a particular place. From 1950, it became common to order former detainees to live in one of the growing number of newly established resettlement centres, villages surrounded by barbed wire and guarded by police posts. Difficult cases could be referred by the committees to a more senior Central Review Commission. Over time, numerous tweaks were made to the system with a view to accelerating the rate of releases. They included changes to procedure, and the introduction of a new category of detention space from late 1949, the Rehabilitation Camp or rehabilitation camp section. Detainees were soon being graded grey (suitable for rehabilitation), black, or even 'very black'.

This move to prompt release should not, however, be mistaken for a liberal approach of 'winning hearts and minds' of detainees. Many of the detainees who were released from detention were not set free into society but rather were deported to China. Around 60% of Chinese people in Malaya were considered under colonial law to be Chinese citizens and therefore were subject to expulsion, even though many of them had been born in the colony. China, for its part, recognised all ethnic Chinese as its citizens. Around a third (2,616) of Emergency Regulation 17D detainees were deported. Most deportations were carried out under Emergency Regulation 17C, that is, they had been detained under individual orders. In 1952 there were 5,575 deportations and 2,793 releases.[8] Up until 1953, more than twice as many detainees were deported as were set free.

Deportation, sometimes referred to as repatriation, offered the British a safety valve that was not available to most other powers resorting to mass detention. It was a serious punishment, because it removed the deportees from their place of residence and consigned them to the difficult political conditions in China, but it absolved the colonial authorities of responsibility for the subsequent fate of the deportees. Deportation was also effective in removing many hard-line communists from the camps and in limiting camp population numbers.

Even before the Emergency, the colonial authorities had used banishment against some communists, but could do so only with the approval of the Colonial Office. From early in the Emergency, the British authorities planned to make extensive use of deportation, with proposals to deport up to a thousand or more people per month in 1949. During the Emergency, the need to refer cases to the Colonial Office was removed. In November 1948 Emergency Regulation 17C allowed for individuals who were under a detention order to be

8 Hack, 'Detention', pp. 624, 626.

repatriated, providing any objection to detention had been heard. Emergency Regulation 17D of January 1949 allowed the High Commissioner in Council to approve the collective deportation of detainees held under 17D, though in the end this provision was little used. Indeed, all deportation to China stopped temporarily after the Communist victory there in late 1949. Deportation was so important that, during the period in 1950 when communist China refused to take deportees, the administration desperately cast around for alternatives, including Borneo, Australian-administered Christmas Island and Kenya. The authorities even considered 'dumping' thousands of detainees on the China coast without engaging with the Chinese government at all. The High Commissioner argued that deportation, more than any other single measure, would contribute to increasing the confidence of the population in the government and to turning the tide in the battle with the communists. Only when the British military declared the 'dump' to be impractical was the idea finally abandoned.[9]

Even before the enforced halt to deportations, however, it was apparent to the British authorities that existing strategies were not enough. Although the security situation had improved in early 1949, it deteriorated later in the year. This circumstance persuaded the British government to appoint a Director of Operations in 1950 to oversee the counter-insurgency campaign. The man appointed to this post, Lieutenant-General Harold Briggs, devised a plan for the large-scale resettlement of rural Chinese people in order to cut communist supply lines and to shield those settlers from intimidation and extortion. Resettlement of squatters had been attempted earlier, but with relatively little success because the camps lacked fences and because there was no legal basis to detain people who were not suspected of direct communist sympathies. Briggs oversaw a program in which villages were constructed, with early subsidies for new housing, with enclosed fences, police posts, and later an armed Home Guard, community facilities and elected management committees. A crucial part of the strategy was that Briggs persuaded reluctant Malay states to allow the occupants of the new settlements to acquire legal tenure over settlement lands.[10] Over time the resettlement areas were refined, and from 1952 they were known by the innocuous name 'New Villages'. The Home Guard members who patrolled the settlements were transformed from unarmed trainees to armed guards, fully responsible for village defence. The New Village system played a crucial role in preventing food supplies from reaching the guerrillas. Rice for the settlement was rationed, or cooked and eaten centrally to diminish the risk of supplies leaking to the jungle. These tight controls on food and movement

9 'Law and Order: Repatriation of Chinese', 1950, The [UK] National Archives, Kew (hereafter TNA), CO 537/5992.

10 Renick, 'The Emergency Regulations', pp. 6–7.

restricted the activities of communist sympathisers but also provided a screen behind which villagers could safely withhold support from the communists. Under the Briggs Plan, around 400,000 Chinese squatters were resettled into more than 350 new settlements that were constructed in eighteen months from June 1950 to the end of 1951. By the end of 1952 the number of these 'New Villages' had grown to 509 and they held 461,822 residents.[11]

In addition to the power to forcibly resettle squatters considered to be a security risk, in late 1949 the British authorities began to deploy article 17DA of the Emergency Regulations, which allowed for an area that was deemed to have aided and abetted the insurgents, or that had failed to provide information to the security forces, to be subject to punitive curfews, fines, police garrisoning and other measures, provided an inquiry had been carried out first. These measures were used especially after the arrival of General Sir Gerald Templer in January 1952 to take up the joint positions of High Commissioner (head of government) and Director of Operations. Templer paid close attention to security operations, visiting 'suspect' settlements and imposing draconian curfews and shop closures. In the most notorious case, the town of Tanjong Malim, with a population of 20,000, was subjected to twenty-two-hour curfew in March 1952.[12]

Britain's social segregation policy in Malaya thus involved a variety of institutions – New Villages, detention camps, and deportation ships – alongside a set of processes that were intended to bring social segregation to an end when it ceased to be useful. The passage of detainees from arrest to release was paralleled by the passage of resettlement areas to become New Villages, and later 'white areas', that is, areas virtually free of insurgent activity, before finally being freed of all exceptional controls. Most New Villages continued to exist into the 1980s and beyond.[13]

2 Detention Camps, Rehabilitation, Resettlement Areas and Deportations

As a consequence of the success of the Briggs Plan from 1950, the number of detentions fell to 6,261 in 1950 and 4,755 in 1951. By 1953, detention orders

11 Hack, 'Detention', pp. 632–633.

12 Karl Hack, 'The Art of Counterinsurgency: Phase Analysis with Primary Reference to Malaya (1948–60) and Secondary Reference to Kenya (1952–60)', in Martin Thomas and Gareth Curless (eds), *Decolonization and Conflict* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), pp. 186–188.

13 See Hack, 'Detention', p. 633, for the 450 New Villages (now entirely free) existing in 2005.

and releases were almost in balance, at around 2,800 each. The next year both shrank to comparatively tiny numbers, around 280 each. By March 1953, the only detainees held under Emergency Regulation 17D were there voluntarily to complete medical treatment.[14]

When colonial police decided that the inhabitants of a particular area were providing wide-scale support to the insurgents, they would first draw up a detailed charge narrative, with appendices listing major incidents in the area. This document went to the Executive Council which then approved mass deportation under Emergency Regulation 17D (4). The community would first become aware of this determination when it was encircled before dawn by military units. Police would then enter the settlement with a team of social welfare, veterinary department and other officials. The residents would be screened, the vulnerable removed to social welfare facilities or hospital, and the remainder would be held for transit to a detention camp. Pet dogs and minor livestock would be shot and possessions enumerated for later compensation.[15]

On 14 January 1949, for instance, the Executive Council authorised the collective detention of around a thousand residents of the settlements of Ulu Temiang and Sikamat, north of the Negeri Sembilan state capital of Seremban. The settlements were surrounded on three sides by rubber plantations and jungle-clad hills and it was alleged that they had supplied a communist base not far away. The communists had supposedly driven out of the settlements those who had opposed them. The operation against Ulu Temiang took place on 6 February and that against Sikamat two days later, on 8 February. In all, 1,135 people, including 585 children, were sent to detention camps. In their submission asking for authority to conduct the mass detention, the police claimed: 'It is clear from the history of this area as summarized … that no person could have been resident therein without being aware of the bandit activities taking place, or indeed without being an active supporter of them'.[16]

Early in the Emergency, detainees were sent to large purpose-built camps such as Tanjong Bruas (near Malacca, November 1948, capacity 2,250), Majeedi (2,700) and Kluang (Johor, 2,700). These camps had similar construction and rules. Ipoh Detention Camp, for interest, had around 1,100 detainees in 1955. The Ipoh detainees were distributed into Blocks, each with around five timber-built, thatched huts housing about fifty inmates each, on bunks, and with

14 ISEAS: H. S. Lee Papers 8.7/9, Meeting of ExCo of 10 March 1953, Agenda and Papers, No 24/1953, 'Detention and Deportation during the Emergency in the Federation of Malaya'.

15 'Mass Eviction of 500 Squatters; will be Sent from Kajang to China', *Straits Times*, 12 Jan. 1949, p. 1, for descriptions of the first operation. Hack, 'Detention', p. 618.

16 ISEAS: H. S. Lee Papers 54/20.

facilities such as kitchens and even basketball courts. Some units were also subdivided by wire into A and B sections.[17] The camp had a hospital block for one hundred patients, guards' quarters for 300 men, female wardresses' quarters for ten, and twelve holding cells. The outside barbed wire fence was about nine-ten feet (three metres) high, with watch towers at corners and mid-points. The main Ipoh detention facility initially took ordinary detainees, and an additional facility initially took squatter families.[18]

Prisoners were not compelled to work except to keep their own premises and utensils clean. Other work was voluntary and for pay, with a canteen where balances recorded could be spent. Detainees could usually tend vegetable plots. Living standards were primitive, but health measures such as mosquito-spraying and inoculations were taken seriously. A Board of Inspection monitored the camp and visits by outsiders – who were allowed to bring gifts at festivals such as Chinese New Year – were permitted.[19]

Thus, conditions were primitive, but not really punitive. Indeed, British authorities had some concerns about communists managing to organise within the camps, and at least two disturbances seem to have derived from insurgent sympathies. In one case visitors were seized. In another incident, one camp section seems to have attacked members of another suspected to be informers or 'running dogs', ultimately beating more than one guard (at least two lost consciousness). This incident ended tragically when a few guards irresponsibly shot into a section, killing three inmates in Ipoh detention camp in June 1955.[20]

There was only one Special Camp or section (initially at Muar, later at Majeedi), where work could be compelled. This camp was for those not amenable to being held with other prisoners. Prisoners here had fewer privileges (such as visits and access to postal services), and those privileges were granted on a stage system of level one to three according to behaviour. Prisoners could be held there for a maximum of six months at a time, and the camp held just 116 detainees in March 1953. But even in this camp, prisoners retained the right of objection.[21]

---

17 Ipoh detention centre information all from the Inquiry into May 1955 disturbances in Arkib Negara Malaysia (National Archives of Malaysia, henceforth ANM) 2001/0068966.

18 ANM 1991/0016189, 'Proposed Emergency Camp – Ipoh, notes', 3 Jan. 1949; ANM 1991/0016189, ANM 1991/0016189, J. Cradock to State Secretary Perak, 5 March 1949.

19 Rashid Maidin, *The Memoirs of Rashid Maidin: From Armed Struggle to Peace* (Petaling Jaya: Strategic Information and Research Development Centre, 2009), pp. 38–43; Khairudin Aljunied, 'The Prison and the Anti-colonialist in British Malaya', *Journal of Historical Sociology*, 25 no. 3 (2012), pp. 386–412.

20 ANM 2001/0068966, Ipoh Detention Camp Enquiry; Donald McGillivray to COSS, 5, 6, 7, 9, 16 June 1955, TNA, CO 1030/145.

21 Hack, 'Detention', pp. 620–621.

The British authorities were conscious of the potential danger of radicalisation within the camps, and they were keen from the start to identify those who could be released safely. They acknowledged that many detainees were only low-level helpers of the communist guerrillas, and that many had families who depended on them. Releases of Emergency Regulation 17D detainees were accelerated from October 1949, as the pro-British Malayan Chinese Association helped to identify areas for safe resettlement. Ultimately some of these early, often unfenced or poorly sited, settlements would fail. Subsequently, however, the Briggs-style fenced, regimented resettlement areas opened up more possibilities for moving people out of the camps.

Government enthusiasm for release was a cause of concern for the police, who feared that dangerous elements might inadvertently be let out. In March 1950 a new order stated that, if a Committee of Review ordered release against police advice, the file should be sent to the police force in the detainee's home state for comment before a final decision was taken. The police continued to press for more safeguards, asking that final decisions in such cases revert to the central government. The Cabinet Malaya Committee decided against this proposal, on the grounds that the Central Review Commission, with two British officials and a Malay Mentri Besar (first minister in one of the state governments), could be relied upon for a sound decision. Besides, the Committees of Review were not profligate in recommending release. In April and May 1950, 1,307 Committee of Review cases resulted in just ten unconditional releases, and 197 with bonds for good behaviour, a rate of under 10% of those reviewed.[22] Bonds might also commit guarantors to large sums, as high as $2,000 each, held against land title.[23] From the point of view of the colonial authorities, the problem was still how to accelerate releases.

In March 1951, therefore, the government ordered the concentration in Tanjong Bruas of all detainees thought not to have communist sympathies. Until February 1952 a Police Interrogation Unit examined each detainee and recommended release, rehabilitation, or extended detention. From March 1952 a further 1,952 interrogation units were established at Majeedi and Ipoh detention camps. The aim was frequent and widespread 're-investigations', noting both 'any changes in a detained person's attitude', and improvements in the security situation which might make release possible. As it became clear that interrogation teams could not be familiar with the security situation all over the colony, a new system was introduced in January 1953, under which the views of the interrogation units, the police from the detainee's area of origin,

22 Minute by Colonial Secretary, 'Detention Procedure', 10 July 1950; Cabinet Malaya Committee Mal C (50)24, TNA, CO 717/199/1.

23 ANM 1988/0014758, 'Release on Bond of Ng Meng Tan', 23 Sept. 1949.

supervisors of Rehabilitation Centres and Detention Camps, and the chairmen of local Committees of Review were collated. The combined detainee file then went to an experienced administrative officer who visited a state/settlement to make recommendations on each case to the Chief Secretary through the Secretary for Defence. The intention from this time on was to review each detainee every nine months.

Detainees who were identified as potentially eligible for release were generally sent first to a rehabilitation camp, or, as at Ipoh, to the rehabilitation section of an existing camp.[24] There they underwent a five- to six-month rehabilitation course. Before release, they were ideally matched with a job and a location to which they could be sent. Release terms might include a residence restriction or the obligation to report to the Officer in Charge of Police District in their destination area. In practice, they were often released to family members in an existing New Village.[25]

The idea of a rehabilitation system seems to have been modelled on techniques developed in Greece, where British forces had worked closely with anti-communist Greek authorities to suppress the Greek communist movement in a civil war that ran from 1943 to 1949.[26] In 1947, the Greek government had established a camp on the island of Makronissos, where it sent 'unreliable' units of the national army for isolation and rehabilitation.[27] The British Secretary for Chinese Affairs in Malaya suggested that the Makronissos technique might work in Malaya. On this basis, Taiping Rehabilitation Camp opened in December 1949, taking up to 600 detainees at a time. The rehabilitation program was based on two assumptions: that most communist supporters were misled rather than hard-line, and that education, discipline and a job could reintegrate them into society. Detainees and warders mixed freely, and the program provided classes in languages and trades from hairdressing to motor mechanics, even the chance to learn on the job in the nearby town. Detainees were only released when the authorities had identified a job and a place for them to be sent. By 1 March 1953 the Taiping Camp had released 1,280 Chinese; just eight had 'retrogressed' to communism, and 103 had been returned to detention camp as 'unresponsive'. The Malayan Chinese Association supplied a bus chassis for trainees to practise their mechanical

24 ANM 1957/6471255. This file covers rehabilitation courses of 4–6 months in Ipoh detention centre in 1955, after which releases were set free 'unconditionally'.

25 ANM 1957/6471255.

26 Amikam Nachmani, 'Civil War and Foreign Intervention in Greece: 1946–49', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 25 no. 4 (1990), pp. 489–522.

27 On the history of the Makronissos (or Makronisos) detention camp, see https://www.makronissos.org/en/, accessed 25 April 2020.

skills on and day-old chicks for them to raise. The Taiping centre, however, took only inmates aged between eighteen and forty and classed 'grey' (who on average had spent about ten months in camp); no attempt was made to rehabilitate actual insurgents or communist party members. Later, other camps and camp sections opened for the rehabilitation of Malay detainees (in Morib, May 1952), and females (in Majeedi, August 1952). Aftercare and after-surveillance were integral to this model. Supervisors of rehabilitation camps were supposed to keep in touch with ex-residents through correspondence.[28] Boys aged seventeen and under were classed as victims and sent to an Advanced Approved School at Telok Mas, girls being so few that they initially went to camps.

By early 1953 the government felt pressure to expedite releases and ease deportations. The government wanted every case reconsidered before deportation, and the Executive Council cancelled increasing numbers of Emergency Regulation 17C orders. Fong Chian, for instance, a 1949 17D deportee who had returned and been re-captured in 1951, was released to stay with her daughter in 1953 and the deportation order against her was cancelled. Even though the number of deportations rapidly diminished in 1953–1954, the government created a 'Priority D' treatment, which allowed a few, select Malayan National Liberation Army supporters (avoiding the young and infirm) to be deported rapidly – within around sixty days of arrest – so that their treatment could be used as an intimidating example to others.[29]

Although British authorities had the upper hand in the conflict by the end of 1952, both population control and military operations continued for another eight years. In 1956 a report by the Director of Operations could describe 'making very good progress by screwing down the people' in one 'sullenly hostile' area.[30] Major operations around New Villages, meanwhile, would begin with arrests, lifting of excess food, extra curfews and controls. These measures would continue over some months. These tighter controls during operational phases also offered villagers an excuse to withdraw support from the guerrillas, and cover for them to give the government information. The measures assisted the colonial authorities in discovering and 'turning' people who had previously sided with the communists.[31]

28 Hack, 'Detention', pp. 621–623. University of Oxford, Weston Library, Huessler Papers 14/3, K.J. Henderson, 'The Taiping Experiment', July 1950.

29 H. S. Lee Papers 79.275, 'Rapid Deportation of Selected Chinese Detainees', 1 April 1954. Hack, 'Deportation', p. 631.

30 DOO (Malaya) to Templer, 15 March 1956, TNA, WO 216/901.

31 ISEAS: H. S. Lee Papers 79.336, DOO Directive on 'The Operational Rice Ration', 6 Oct. 1953.

3 Conclusion

Detention in Malaya during the Emergency years was part of a spectrum of different forms of social segregation and reintegration infrastructures and practices. Detention places – whether New Villages, formal detention and rehabilitation camps or deportation ships – did not simply detain. They were places for segregating, screening, removing, rehabilitating, and preparing people for release as a prelude to aftercare and after-surveillance. They were also places of resistance, as evidenced by more than one deadly camp riot, and the murder of two people identified as running dogs by deportees on one China-bound ship in November 1950.[32]

Recent historiography on detention camps has focussed on the scale and types of violence used in some systems. Scheipers, especially, has emphasised the post-war switch from punitive use of camps to rehabilitation, accompanied sometimes by coercion or torture. It needs to be recognised, however, that not all detention systems were uniformly brutal. The system employed during the Malayan Emergency was not conspicuously inhumane. The system of detention, moreover, needs to be placed in the broader context of other control measures and indeed violence and resistance by prisoners as well.[33]

The New Villages were an attempt to spatially segregate and thereby to control people seen as either prone to support communists or vulnerable to communist intimidation. From the beginning they incorporated elements of spatial control (fences, curfews, police posts, restrictions on food movement, obligation for Home Guard service) and measures leading to eventual reintegration. These measures included the provision of social welfare (subsidies, community halls, schools, medical help, and subsequently land titles and practical assistance with livestock and crops). Over time, many New Villages became self-sustaining communities with elected committees and a range of facilities that might provoke jealousy from less favoured, nearby settlements. Detainees were treated more harshly when they were perceived as supporting insurgents, but this harshness was balanced with the promise of better treatment for those who sided with the authorities, for instance, in providing information. Controls were a response to the immediate security circumstances: in

32 Hack, 'Deportation', p. 630.

33 Caroline Elkins, *Britain's Gulag: The Brutal End of Empire in Kenya* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2005); David French, *The British Way in Counter-Insurgency, 1945–1967* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 162–166; Simon Webb, *Britain's Concentration Camps* (Barnsley: Pen and Sword, 2016); Sybille Scheipers, 'The Use of Camps in Colonial Warfare', *Journal of Commonwealth and Imperial History*, 43 no. 4 (2015), pp. 678–698.

particular, controls on food supplies were not targeted at the New Villagers themselves, but instead were intended to weaken the insurgents. The New Villages were not temporary, punitive, concentration camps, but rather segregation settlements whose use varied over time, and which in time became a permanent part of Malaya's geography.[34]

References

Blackburn, Kevin and Karl Hack, *War Memory and the Making of Modern Malaysia and Singapore* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2012).

Elkins, Caroline, *Britain's Gulag: The Brutal End of Empire in Kenya* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2005).

French, David, *The British Way in Counter-Insurgency, 1945–1967* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

Hack, Karl, 'The Malayan Emergency as Counter-Insurgency Paradigm', *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 32 no. 3 (2009), pp. 383–414.

Hack, Karl, 'Detention, Deportation and Resettlement: British Counterinsurgency and Malaya's Rural Chinese, 1948–60', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 43 no. 4 (2015), pp. 611–40.

Hack, Karl, 'The Art of Counterinsurgency: Phase Analysis with Primary Reference to Malaya (1948–60) and Secondary Reference to Kenya (1952–60)', in Martin Thomas and Gareth Curless (eds), *Decolonization and Conflict* (London: Bloomsbury 2017), pp. 177–196.

Khairudin Aljunied, 'The Prison and the Anti-colonialist in British Malaya', *Journal of Historical Sociology*, 25 no. 3 (2012), pp. 386–412.

Nachmani, Amikam, 'Civil War and Foreign Intervention in Greece: 1946–49', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 25 no. 4 (1990), pp. 489–522.

Rashid Maidin, *The Memoirs of Rashid Maidin: From Armed Struggle to Peace* (Petaling Jaya: Strategic Information and Research Development Centre, 2009).

Renick, Rhoderick Dhu, 'The Emergency Regulations of Malaya: Causes and Effect', *Journal of Southeast Asian History*, 6 no. 2 (1965), pp. 1–39.

Scheipers, Sybille, 'The Use of Camps in Colonial Warfare', *Journal of Commonwealth and Imperial History*, 43 no. 4 (2015), pp. 678–698.

Webb, Simon, *Britain's Concentration Camps* (Barnsley: Pen and Sword, 2016).

34 Johor's New Villages more than doubled (from 19 to 44) its number of 'towns' with populations over 1,000: see Renick, 'The Emergency Regulations', p. 11.

PART 2

Isolating Public Enemies

∴

CHAPTER 4

An Experiment with the Island Detention of Public Enemies in Postcolonial Burma

Nick Cheesman

Abstract

In January 1959, a newly formed military-led government set up a camp in the Cocos Islands, the remotest archipelago within Burma's territory, to confine detainees cast as threats to law and order. Who did it send? Why? What did they encounter there and how did they get back to the mainland? This chapter addresses these questions via a reading of former detainees' memoirs. In doing so it attends to how the detainees imagined and acted upon possibilities for their own liberation from the camp, and possibilities for the freedom of Burma from military domination. And it considers how the political history of Burma might be reimagined through a reading of memoirs and other sources recounting struggles for liberation, individually and collectively.

Keywords

Burma (Myanmar) – Coco Islands – Cocos Islands – Ne Win – penal settlements – political detention – memoirs – detention camps

Just after dawn on 30 January 1959, a ship slipped its moorings in Rangoon harbour.[1] Crammed into the hull was not its usual cargo of supplies for lighthouses in the Bay of Bengal. Instead there were some 150 men and boys whom trucks had brought to the docks in the early morning hours from Burma's central jail, at Insein, in the city's northern suburbs. Over fifty were 'section five' inmates, detained under the Public Order (Preservation) Act.

1 Throughout this chapter I use the 1959–1960 Anglicisations of proper names for the city of Rangoon, today Yangon, and Burma, today Myanmar, as well as for the group of islands that today is generally referred to in English as the Coco Islands but at the time in which the events discussed here occurred is identified in English language documents as the Cocos Islands.

©

Passed in 1947, on the eve of Burma's independence and during a time of political and social turmoil in the wake of the Second World War, the Public Order (Preservation) Act authorised police to arrest without judicial warrant anyone suspected of 'having acted, or acting, or being about to act in any manner calculated to disturb, or to assist a disturbance of the public tranquillity'.[2] Elected governments had detained political opponents under section five throughout the 1950s.[3] The parliamentary opposition had tried to repeal the law but lacked the numbers to succeed.[4]

At the tail end of 1958, an unelected but constitutionally appointed interim government headed by General Ne Win redoubled its use of the section – with a new twist. Some among those detained because of the threats they allegedly posed to tranquillity, security and order would no longer stay in prison, but in an island camp instead.

Unknown to the passengers, the ship that departed port that early January morning was destined for this new camp, on the largest of the five islands in the Cocos group. It was known officially as Great Cocos Island, but here, for convenience and consistent with writing in Burmese, is referred to simply as Cocos Island. It was an unremarkable seven-mile-long stretch of land rising barely over a hundred metres above sea level, around eighty kilometres north of the Andamans chain. At some 420 kilometres from Rangoon, Burma's then capital, and 270 kilometres from the nearest mainland coastline, this was the country's least accessible territory. On 19 March, a second group of detainees comprising another fifty or so section-fivers and around another hundred convicts, the latter sent to construct an airfield, joined them. In May a further twenty-eight came, and a few more followed later, bringing the total number of section-fivers sent to over 130.[5] Convict labourers exceeded 200. In addition there were around fifty guards and civilian personnel, and some 150 soldiers.

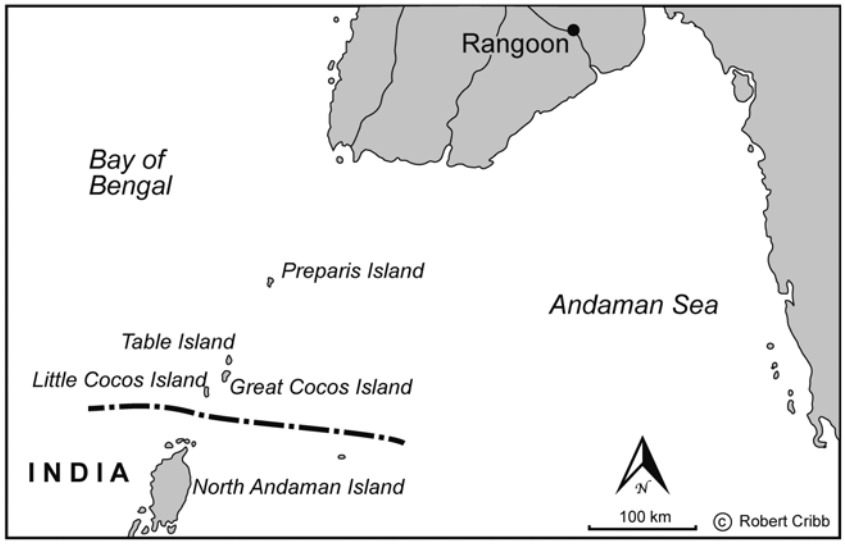
---

2 Section 5(1), Public Order (Preservation) Act, 1947, Burma Act XVI, 1947, as amended via Burma Act XXVIII, 1947 and Act No. 49, 1953.

3 See Nick Cheesman, *Opposing the Rule of Law: How Myanmar's Courts Make Law and Order* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 66–69.

4 Hugh Tinker, *The Union of Burma: a Study of the First Years of Independence* (London: Oxford University Press, 4th edn, 1967), p. 142.

5 Ko Ko Lay lists 134 names and affiliations in his appendix to *Balèhè Kogo Kyun* (Rangoon: Khin Maung Yi & Sons, 1960). A retired prison officer who publishes anonymously concurs that the number was over 130: Anyeinza Taung Ayashi Tit-u [A retired prison officer], *Kogo Kyun yè Thweswan Hmattan* (Yangon: Yinmyo Book House, 2016), pp. 15–16. Htet Myet gives a number of 153, but no list, in *Ahmaungduko Pyatthangyin* (Yangon: Seitkugyogyo Books, 2nd edn, 2016), xxxiv.



MAP 4.1 Cocos Islands, Burma

In experimenting with the island camp in 1959 the Ne Win government was literally and metaphorically building on sand. Although British colonial government had a long history of using islands to incarcerate enemies, the Cocos Islands had never been used for this purpose. The survey team that the colonial government of India had tasked in 1857 with finding a site for a penal settlement in the Andamans circled the island group but wrote that it was 'evidently not suited for convict settlements' because it lacked natural harbours.[6] The colonial government in Burma shelved a later proposal for a self-sufficient penal settlement in the group as impractical, because the islands lacked arable land and could not be reached safely during the monsoon.[7]

The postcolonial government decided to encamp public enemies on Cocos Island anyway. Whom did it send? Why? What did they encounter there and how did they respond? How did they get back to the mainland? More generally, what lessons can we draw from an inquiry into conditions in the camp that are useful for thinking about political conditions in postcolonial Burma – and perhaps, also, for other times and places, including our own? This chapter addresses

6 Government of India (Home Department), *The Andaman Islands; with Notes on Barren Island* (Calcutta: Baptist Mission Press, 1859), p. 15.

7 Ian Brown, 'A Commissioner Calls: Alexander Paterson and Colonial Burma's Prisons', *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, Vol. 38, No. 2 (2007), pp. 300–301.

these questions in three parts. The first discusses a number of detainees' memoirs on which the chapter's contents rest, and situates them in a longer tradition of detention memoir writing. The second considers some of the features of the experimental island detention camp that refer to but also depart from what Katherine Roscoe describes as the 'carceral islands' of the British Empire.[8] The third attends to how island camp detainees imagined and acted upon possibilities for their own liberation, and for the prospects of freedom for Burma from military domination. The chapter concludes by considering how the political history of postcolonial Burma might be reimagined through a reading of memoirs and other sources recounting struggles for liberation of this sort – not only from colonial but also postcolonial state violence and oppression. And it reflects on how study of the experimental detention island of the postcolony might contribute to thinking about the detention archipelago in our time.

1 The Memoirs of Public Enemies

The accounts of conditions on Cocos Island in 1959 from which this chapter draws are contained in the memoirs of former detainees. By 1960, when these memoirs were published, the genre of prison memoir was already well established. Over the prior half-century, and especially since the 1930s, leaders of Burma's anti-imperialist urban political resistance had followed their Indian peers and allies in recounting their incarceration by British colonial oppressors.[9] Incarceration pressed politically active detainees, as David Arnold writes of those in India, 'to strengthen and redefine their sense of identity and purpose' in relation to other detainees, prison authorities, and the wider political community.[10] One important way of doing this was through the memoir. Colonial-era political detainees appropriated the jail experience to further a counter-colonial narrative, as did their peers struggling for freedom from British, Dutch and French colonial despotism elsewhere in Southeast and South Asia – and in semicolonial Siam, amid messy domestic politics following the end of the absolute monarchy – as the authors of other chapters in this book discuss.

---

8 Katherine Roscoe, 'A Natural Hulk: Australia's Carceral Islands in the Colonial Period, 1788–1901', *International Review of Social History*, Vol. 63, special issue 26 (2018), pp. 45–63.

9 For instance, Chit Maung, *Taung Ayatha* (Rangoon: Journal Kyaw, 1939?) and Thakin Nu, *Yetsetpa-pegwè* (Yangon: Sabelawga Book House, 4th edn, 2012 [1941]).

10 David Arnold, 'The Self and the Cell: Indian Prison Narratives as Life Histories', in David Arnold and Stuart Blackburn (eds), *Telling Lives in India: Biography, Autobiography, and Life History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), p. 31.

The retelling of jail stories in Burma continued after independence in 1948. Former detainees wrote memoirs, fiction and serialised articles. Among them were the renowned writer Thein Pe Myint, and the publisher Ludu U Hla, who developed a modern style of reportage in Burmese, narrating and retelling life stories of inmates he met while jailed from 1953 to 1956.[11] Maung Ne Win's two-year 'jail days' series in the *Ludu* monthly, on his experiences as a section-five detainee in 1954 and 1955, culminated shortly before the Cocos Island camp and the memoirs it engendered came into existence.[12]

Professional writers and former revolutionary communist party members authored the two most comprehensive memoirs of the island detention camp. One, Maung Chit Yi, was editor of the *Lanzin* newspaper, and the other, Ko Ko Lay, editor at *Htun Daily*. Of the two, Maung Chit Yi's book has a more detailed description of the detainees' transport to the island, and their situation on it.[13] Ko Ko Lay's is a more personal narrative.[14] On top of these, Thakin Mya Than wrote a political biography of two prominent public enemies with whom he was held on the island: Thakin Pe Htay, the aging former leader of the 'red flag' faction of the Burma Communist Party, and Thakin Ohn Myint, another anticolonial nationalist leader-turned-journalist.[15] Another detainee, Myint Kyaw, published serialised and subsequently collected vignettes and profiles of detainees on the island.[16]

The memoirs are, like the colonial-era memoirs that Peter Zinoman read and interpreted for his seminal history of imprisonment in French colonial Vietnam, important historical sources.[17] Written during or shortly after their authors' confinement, they are less likely to have included unintended errors of fact or embellishments of the sort that occur with the passing of time. They contain detailed, personal narratives of daily life in the camp, and offer

11 Among the best known titles are Ludu U Hla, *Taung hnin Lutha* (Rangoon: Ludu News Press, 1957) and awarded the Sapebiman [Burma Translation Society] Prize for literature of that year, and Ludu U Hla, *Sit, Achit hnin Taung* (Rangoon: Ludu News Press, 1960), a novel based on the author's jail experiences, and translated into English under the title *The Victim*.

12 The 'Agyin-e ne-mya' series ran from the November 1956 to November 1958 issues of the monthly *Ludu / The People*. Maung Ne Win, not to be confused with the army general of the same name, was assistant editor of the *Ludu* daily.

13 Maung Chit Yi, *Kogo Kyun hma Pôkma Nga* (Rangoon: U Saw Lwin, 1960).

14 Ko Ko Lay, *Balèhè Kogo Kyun*.

15 Thakin Mya Than, *Hnit Kyun Pyan Thanmani Hnit U* (Rangoon: [n.p.], 1960).

16 Myint Kyaw, *Kogo Kyun hma Zatlanmya* (Rangoon: Hatha Press, 1960).

17 Peter Zinoman, *The Colonial Bastille: A History of Imprisonment in Vietnam, 1862–1940* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), pp. 11–12.

a variety of views, all in one way or another aimed at informing readers of the facts of the island and getting them to reappraise political conditions in Burma around 1960.

But it is not only in their recalling of fresh memories that these memoirs are compelling. It is also in their authors' urgency to write against the looming, and in hindsight imminent, dangers of military dictatorship. They do this in part by drawing attention to, and asking questions about, the camp's existence: not just about the fact of its existence but of how such a thing as this island camp could, in the country for whose independence from colonial despotism they had fought so hard, be possible at all. The next section concerns that topic.

2 The Island Detention Camp

When the British armed forces invaded and occupied lower and then upper Burma in the mid- and late nineteenth century, island internment was already among the repertoires of the imperial carceral regime. From 1858, the British administration dispatched thousands of 'mutineers, deserters, and rebels' to the Andaman Islands penal colony at Port Blair, some forty miles to the south of Cocos.[18] Burmese were involved in work on the island penal colony from the beginning, both as convict labourers and as hired tradesmen.[19] Most of the sea transport to the colony in the early years came from the British-occupied port of Moulmein, on Burma's eastern seaboard.[20] The jail at Port Blair later held Burmese prisoners, among them over 500 whom the British transported in 1934 for their alleged parts in a large-scale rural rebellion against colonial rule in Burma.[21]

18 Dispatch from the Home Department, Judicial, No. 3/1858, in Government of India, *The Andaman Islands*, p. 1. See also Clare Anderson, *The Indian Uprising of 1857–8: Prisons, Prisoners and Rebellion* (London: Anthem, 2007); Clare Anderson, Madhumita Mazumdar and Vishvajit Pandya, 'Introduction', in Clare Anderson, Madhumita Mazumdar and Vishvajit Pandya (eds), *New Histories of the Andaman Islands: Landscape, Place and Identity in the Bay of Bengal, 1790–2012* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), pp. 1–26.

19 Aparna Vaidik, *Imperial Andamans: Colonial Encounter and Island History* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), pp. 114–16.

20 See the Instructions for the Re-Occupation of the Andaman Islands, as a Convict Settlement, in Government of India, *The Andaman Islands*, Appendix 3.

21 Clare Anderson, 'Sepoys, Servants and Settlers: Convict Transportation in the Indian Ocean, 1787–1945', in Frank Dikötter and Ian Brown (eds), *Cultures of Confinement: A History of the Prison in Africa, Asia and Latin America* (London: Hurst, 2007), p. 211; Vaidik, *Imperial Andamans*, p. 156.

The postcolonial detention island had a family resemblance to its colonial predecessors. It was remote. Its juridical status was indeterminate. And it housed both encamped public enemies and ordinary criminal convicts sent to work – a practice that resonated with earlier arrangements.[22] But it was not a penal colony. Nor did it have the qualities of the postcolonial mainland jail of its day. It was neither a revival of the carceral island technologies and philosophies of the coloniser, nor an extension of the mainland carceral regime to offshore. It reintroduced to the postcolony a practice of confinement that recalled the worst experiences of colonial despotism, but it did not mimic them. The island camp was, so to speak, materially, juridically and politically dis-placed: an experiment not modeled on prior ones, but referential to them, nevertheless.

Materially, the island did not duplicate the practices of colonial carceral islands, even if in some basic elements it referred to them. It tracked the geography of penal colonial predecessors, being at a distance from the mainland, and consisting of relatively open and easily managed, largely unused space. It was at the time a source of coconuts but was not otherwise of any special interest to the postcolonial state. It was sparsely populated by a handful of settlers from the mainland, who were located in a small village, and possibly a few nomadic maritime people.[23] A lighthouse on one of the lesser islands in the group was the only human-made structure visible from out at sea.

The government constructed the camp on the spur of the moment.[24] It was still building it when the first cohort of inmates arrived.[25] The camp's barracks were made of wood and its fences of wire. It bore more of a resemblance to the concentration camps containing famished, diseased, and latent enemy populations in other parts of the 'barbed-wire empire' that the British built over the nineteenth century than to the jail at Port Blair; or in Indochina, the French island penitentiary of Poulo Condore.[26] This was not a site intended as the

22 See Christian De Vito, Clare Anderson and Ulbe Bosma, 'Transportation, Deportation and Exile: Perspectives from the Colonies in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries', *International Review of Social History*, 63, special issue 26 (2018), p. 18.

23 Some of the prison labourers were, according to Ko Ko Lay, enticed with stories of 'Salôn' women, but the memoirs do not describe encounters with any of these so-called Malayan 'sea gypsies': *Balèhè Kogo Kyun*, p. 28.

24 Former Brigadier General Maung Maung, *Einzaung Azoya: Shudaung Acho hma Dimogayezi ko Santhatchin/ Some Aspects of the 'Caretaker Government': An Experiment in Democratic Process*, trans. by Sithu Kyaw (Yangon: Roads of Yangon Press, 2018), p. 160. This book is a translation of an unpublished manuscript in English.

25 Maung Chit Yi, *Kogo Kyun hma Pôkma Nga*, pp. 67–68.

26 Aidan Forth, *Barbed-Wire Imperialism: Britain's Empire of Camps, 1876–1903* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2017).

foundation of something more. It was not built for the long run. Its sole objective was to shock the detainees and their allies remaining on the mainland into complaisance.[27]

Though the camp bore a correspondence more to the non-jail forms of punitive relocation and detention that preceded it than to the jails of the penal colony, juridically, the interim government insisted that the camp *was* penal, and not an aberration or abnormality at all. The judicial affairs minister, U Chan Tun Aung, told parliament that the civilian government before 1958 already had had designs to set up a jail on the island, and had planned to use prison labour on coconut and fruit plantations.[28] His government was merely implementing an existing plan, he insisted. It was all perfectly normal and in accordance with law. 'A new Jail', his ministry later recorded for posterity in the interim government's report on its accomplishments, as if to reinforce the point, 'was opened at Cocos Island on January 24, 1959. This jail is termed a District Jail in the Hanthawaddy District with a special sanction to accept prisoners with sentences of more than five years'.[29]

Yet section-five detainees were not sentenced prisoners at all. The putative danger they represented to the state, not something they had actually done, was reason for their confinement. The danger they represented came from their being left-leaning journalists, writers and editors, and serving or former members of communist and workers' parties. Some were former insurgents who had surrendered with reassurances they could return home without repercussions. A few were students. One was a sitting parliamentarian. Of the others, around twenty were alleged habitual criminals caught up in a law-and-order operation. The remainder, the police had sent inadvertently or maliciously. Among this number were an illiterate teenage boy, and four bewildered and terrified Indian businessmen. Maung Chit Yi was a substitute for his housemate, for whom police came looking but could not locate. Not wanting to return to their station empty-handed they told him to go with them 'for a while' instead.[30] At the station a duty officer pulled a page from a pre-authorised sheaf of blank arrest sheets issued by the police Special Branch, and filled in Maung Chit Yi's personal details. Before long, he was on the island.

---

27 Maung Maung, *Einzaung Azoya*, p. 160.

28 *Pyidaungzu Myanma Naingngandaw Paliman, Dudiya Pyithu Hluttaw Nyilagan Hmattan* [Union of Burma Parliament, Second Session of the House of Deputies], vol. 8, *Proceedings*, no. 4, 17 February 1959, pp. 360–61.

29 Government of the Union of Burma, *Is Trust Vindicated?* (Rangoon: Director of Information, 1960), p. 65.

30 Maung Chit Yi, *Kogo Kyun hma Pôkma Nga*, p. 26.

The island camp also departed radically from the mainland jail in its isolating effects. According to Brigadier General Maung Maung, who had had a key role in the army's takeover of government, he had personally ordered construction of the camp with the specific objective of cutting off all communication between detainees and their families and supporters, so as to have the desired shocking pedagogical effect.[31] This required the government to cut off communication with everyone: not just to enclose, but to isolate totally.

Jails enclosed, but they did not isolate. Inside them, inmates could communicate routinely among themselves. They could meet with relatives, friends and lawyers. Political detainees, including those under section five, had special privileges. They could send and receive news freely, work on habeas corpus applications, and, if they wished to, stay involved in public life. The island detention camp denied all these possibilities. It did so not only by virtue of distance but also because the interim government reclassified the island as a military territory, with the effect that passing commercial ships and unauthorised government craft could not berth.[32] On top of this classificatory impediment to access, the military revoked the special privileges that detainees had enjoyed in mainland jails.

Additionally, the island was inaccessible during the monsoon, for reasons that the government's colonial predecessors had already documented. So although in the middle of 1959 the home affairs minister, U Khin Maung Pyu, could blame inclement weather rather than official intransigence for the government being unable to return the detained parliamentarian to Rangoon so as to sit in the legislative session in August, the fact of his being unreachable by sea or air could hardly have been unexpected.[33] The government knew perfectly well that the island could not be reached safely during the months of high seas and heavy rains. In short, soldiers and the sea together either gave or denied access to the island. Civilian authorities that could visit jails on the mainland routinely could not reach the camp without the acquiescence of both.

It appears, then, that the historical facts distinguishing and separating the island camp from the mainland penitentiary in Burma align with the radical distinction that Giorgio Agamben has made between the prison and the camp, inasmuch as 'while prison law only constitutes a particular sphere of penal law and is not outside the normal order, the juridical constellation that guides

31 Maung Maung, *Einzaung Azoya*, pp. 160, 163.

32 Ko Ko Lay, *Balèhè Kogo Kyun*, p. 132.

33 *Pyidaungzu Myanma Naingngandaw Paliman*, vol. 9, no. 1, 13 August 1959, pp. 143–45.

the camp is … martial law and the state of siege'.[34] The state of siege arises in response to threats posed not by individual putative criminals, but members of a threatening collectivity, which is to say, public enemies.[35] Such was the status of the men detained on Cocos Island, and such were the circumstances that, the military-led government insisted, had brought them to the camp. But what did they make of that fact, and what did they do about it? The next section addresses this question, by attending to the collective struggles of inmates for liberation from the camp's wooden barracks and barbed-wire fences.

3 Struggles for Liberation

The Cocos Island memoirs register the idea of liberation and the imperative to struggle towards it on two levels. The first concerns the practices of control over the body of the detainee. The second concerns the practices of control over the body politic. Each is concerned with the possibilities of action for freedom.

These possibilities had animated political struggles in Burma for some three to four decades, first of all in opposition to the imperial government of the British, then of the Japanese, then, with independence in 1948, among a dizzying array of competing political and armed organisations in the country.[36] Communist forces were the largest threat, and as such, members of communist groups and their allies made up the majority of detainees on Cocos.

Compounding civil war, urban opponents launched protests aimed at further economic and political disruption. In 1948 and again in 1949 communist-backed unions launched national strikes. Oil workers walked off the job in 1950. Students shut down universities and colleges in 1953 over poor educational conditions and lack of academic freedom. Police violently dispersed demonstrations and occupied campuses. In response to further unrest, in 1956 the government banned student unions and jailed around a hundred of their leaders. Politics were heady and the stakes were high. Struggles for liberation took twists and turns that brought the army onto the political scene, and the section-five detainees to Cocos Island.

---

34 Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. by Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), p. 21.

35 See Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, trans. by George Schwab (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), p. 18.

36 See generally, Michael Charney, *A History of Modern Burma* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), ch. 3, 4.

Despite the fierce ideological competition among the inhabitants of the camp that had brought them all together there from the mainland, the memoirs have no distinctive formal ideological statements or manifestos. The imperative for liberation is spelled out instead through observation and description of daily activities and small acts of resistance to confinement.

Unlike the Buru Island camp established under the New Order military dictatorship in Indonesia (discussed in this volume by Ken Setiawan), where detainees were forced to work on rice paddies and construct barracks for new inmates, political detainees on Cocos in 1959 were kept enclosed.[37] They remained behind barbed wire fencing for the duration of their stay: listening to the sound of the Bay of Bengal in which they were unable to bathe, and watching the swaying of coconut palms whose fruit they were not allowed to pick for themselves, let alone plant or harvest. Anything that broke open the monotony of confinement reminded detainees of the possibility for liberation. Maung Chit Yi speaks of the feeling of the short and precious moments he enjoyed each day early in the period of detention when the inmates were brought in single file from the interior of the camp to a bathing well that initially was located beyond the barbed wire.[38] Though still confined to the island, this sense of being outside of the immediate confines of the camp was sweet. Myint Kyaw detects that taste of liberation when he watches a section-five inmate who had been detained for housebreaking rather than for political reasons adroitly scale the fences of the camp, climb a coconut palm outside and throw fruit back into the compound for everyone to enjoy, before being accosted by camp security.[39]

The imperative for liberation is found, too, in recurrent reflections on collective acts of resistance to the conditions into which the inmates had been thrust. The authors cast these actions as struggles, or *taikpwè* – a term that in Burmese evokes a sense of two or more sides or groups clashing, though not necessarily through the use of arms or in warfare. Taikpwè evokes the spirit of the political and, if necessary, armed combat in which they had participated on the mainland that had led them to their sandy internment deep in the Bay of Bengal.

Although pretty much everyone agreed on the need for struggle, it was not so easy to agree on its particulars. Inmates gathered surreptitiously to recognise national dates such as Martyrs' Day and Resistance Day, as well as

37 As discussed in the conclusion, a later iteration of the camp on Cocos was, like Buru, organised on the principle that the detainees should be self-sufficient. See Htet Myet, *Ahmaungduko Pyatthangyin*.

38 Maung Chit Yi, *Kogo Kyun hma Pôkma Nga*, pp. 69–70. Later the bathing area was relocated to inside the camp.

39 Myint Kyaw, *Kogo Kyun hma Zatlanmya*, ch. 1.

international dates such as May Day and Gorky Day, alongside days to commemorate Burmese literati and a host of other days commemorating the founding of various political parties. Those gatherings were important markers of political solidarity, but they did not take the form of struggle. The latter had to be strategic. It aimed at deliberately drawing detainees into confrontation with camp authorities.

Some inmates wanted to struggle from the outset. Ko Ko Lay recounts that on the very first day at the camp disputes broke out about what needed to be done in response to the unprecedented circumstances in which the detainees found themselves. A few urged immediate resistance through generalised refusal to comply with orders. Others counselled caution. They worried that so far from the mainland anything could happen, and reminded others of reports not so long ago about the poisoning of over a thousand political detainees in a South Vietnamese jail.[40] Couldn't the same happen to them? What had been inconceivable on the mainland was on the island a vivid possibility. The side advocating cool heads and patient action won out. The inmates studied their conditions rather than rushing headlong into a fight that might cost them their lives.

For these reasons, and others pertaining to rival factional and party positions, it was not until 6 August, a little over seven months after reaching the island, that the inmates enclosed in the camp compound finally launched a collective political action, not in the form of a protest against conditions directly, but to commemorate Hiroshima Day. Assembling defiantly of their own accord outside their barracks, the men stood for a minute's silence and then sang a peace song, whereupon the wardens ordered them to disperse.[41]

By October not just the passing of time but also worsening conditions on the island had precipitated further struggle. Although the monsoon had passed and the seas were stilled, no vessels had brought supplies or news for the detainees. Food supplies were dwindling. The tobacco was exhausted. Some detainees had taken to smoking tea. Suitable rolling paper was in short supply. With the help of sympathetic guards the detainees got their hands on cheroot leaves growing outside the compound, only to have them confiscated under the warden's orders for 'security' reasons. This spurious explanation irritated Myint Kyaw, a heavy smoker, who asked rhetorically in his stories whether

40 Ko Ko Lay, *Balèhè Kogo Kyun*, p. 36. The poisoning is also mentioned in Maung Chit Yi, *Kogo Kyun hma Pôkma Nga*, p. 85. The incident is discussed in Ang Cheng Guan, 'The Huong Lap and Phu Loi Incidents, and the Decision to Resume Armed Struggle in South Vietnam (January-April 1959)', *South East Asia Research*, 4, no. 1 (1996), pp. 3–22.

41 Ko Ko Lay, *Balèhè Kogo Kyun*, pp. 72–75.

these leaves might somehow have been used as arms, or fashioned into a boat with which to return to the mainland.[42]

Under such petty impositions, relationships in and around the camp became more strained. Inmates started acting in open defiance of guards' routine instructions; soldiers had to come and issue commands directly for inmates to take them seriously.[43] Morale among their rank and file was low too. It got worse after a ship docked on 7 November but no supplies came to the camp. When another came a fortnight later, again bringing materials for construction of the airfield but not for the camp, cadres urged party leaders to act. By now they had had word via camp guards and medics that Cocos Island had been the subject of legislative debate, and had attracted media interest.[44] Aware that their plight was a subject of concern at home, and feeling more emboldened, the members of various factions debated what form collective action might take.

Thakin Pe Htay decided that the time for talk was over and on 1 December he unilaterally started a hunger strike. His foremost demand was unconditional release. Five others immediately joined him. The action was fortuitously timed. The government was getting ready for a general election and return to civilian rule in 1960. Something had to be done about the island camp. Should a hunger strike drag on and strikers die, it could damage the good-news story about the incipient return to democracy and respect for constitutionalism that the interim government wanted to tell.

Thakin Pe Htay was no ordinary hunger striker but a respected fighter for national independence. His reputation was still taken seriously. So his struggle obtained a relatively swift response. Ten days into the strike, a high-level delegation, comprising the deputy commissioner of jails and some senior army officers, came to talk. After inspecting the camp they went to meet the strikers. Having promised to consider the strikers' demands, the negotiating team succeeded in getting Pe Htay and his followers to suspend the strike.[45]

Almost as abruptly and erratically as it had started up, the camp shut down. Over the coming days, vessels came and went, taking back small numbers of camp detainees, but also bringing more labourers, and confusingly, even a few more section-five inmates. Then on 23 December the warden entered the camp and informed the inmates that special privileges removed from them at the start of detention were restored. Things were looking up. When news reached the men that all political detainees would be returned to the mainland by

42 Myint Kyaw, *Kogo Kyun hma Zatlanmya*, p. 48.
43 Anyeinza Taung Ayashi Tit-u, *Kogo Kyun yè Thweswan Hmattan*, p. 17.
44 Ko Ko Lay, *Balèhè Kogo Kyun*, p. 76.
45 Ko Ko Lay, *Balèhè Kogo Kyun*, p. 88.

31 December, a cheer went up around the camp. Sure enough, on the evening of 27 December the remaining section-five inmates, over a hundred in total, boarded a ship that brought them back into the port of Rangoon on the 29th, and from there, back to the central jail at Insein. From there, some, like Ko Ko Lay subsequently walked free, while others, like Maung Chit Yi, remained in section-five confinement.

The men's departure did not immediately spell the end of postcolonial Burma's first experiment with island confinement. The convict labourers had not finished building the airstrip. The effects of the final struggle in the camp reverberated in the village that housed the labouring convicts. Seeing the section fivers returning to the mainland, some among the convicts also began to issue demands about their working conditions and terms of detention. On 10 March 1960, around 150 of the 200 labourers remaining on the island to complete work on the airstrip assembled to discuss their situation and make a list of demands, which included that they return within a year, and get recognised for the service they had performed to the nation by constructing the airfield. When jailors and military officers in the evening time declined to respond, four men in the vanguard – whom Ko Ko Lay says had come as section-five detainees but later had been transferred to the labour camp – also went on hunger strike.[46]

The security personnel decided to wait and see what happened. The next day, 14 March, five more joined the strike. Soldiers and guards then locked down their barracks and – in sharp contrast to their handling of the section-five detainees – assaulted the hunger strikers to have them break their fast. Thereafter they assembled and intimidated the others. A group of the men held a sit-down strike rather than go to work. The strike and beatings went on for three more days, until the two sides renegotiated. The authorities agreed to consider the demands, to give injured strikers medical treatment, and not to punish them. The struggle was called off. Ninety-three of the strikers were returned to the mainland on 29 April. The remainder stayed to complete the airstrip. Unlike the detention camp, the airfield is still used to this day.

4 Postscript

In a foreword to Ko Ko Lay's book, the writer Zawana remarked that reading memoirs of political detainees who struggled against colonial oppression and reading those from the period of national independence for him generated

46 Ko Ko Lay, *Balèhè Kogo Kyun*, p. 162.

different feelings. Whereas the cruelty of the colonial oppressor was somehow comprehensible, he said, the violence committed against those sent to Cocos Island was both harder to understand and harder to bear.[47] The foreword closes with a prayer that its author might not have to read any more of such cruelties for as long as the Union of Burma continued to exist.

Zawana's prayer was answered, but not as he meant it to be. After the military seized power in 1962, plunging the country into almost half a century of dictatorship, it moved quickly to detain office-holders at the top levels of government – and over time, anyone deemed likely to threaten its manner of rule. The memoirs of the experimental island detention camp, like so many other books, disappeared from Burma's bookstore shelves. In 1969, even as it released many of those detained in the days, weeks and years after its takeover, the military government reopened Cocos Island for political dissidents.

This time 233 political detainees went to Cocos in a single group. Only soldiers and guards, who, like the detainees, were for the most part kept in the dark about their destination, accompanied them. No ordinary convicts were sent to labour alongside the detainees.[48] The new contingent received machetes, tools and fishing nets, and was left to fish, hunt and forage for most of its needs. When its members launched a series of hunger strikes in protest at their detention on the island, they got much less sympathy than the strikers over a decade before. It took a fifty-three-day strike in which eight strikers died to make the government again close the island detention camp, in late 1971. The inmates returned to jails on the mainland, from which some subsequently walked free. But this time they had no opportunities, either in jail or out, to publish the kind of memoirs that Zawana wished never to see again. Like their counterparts at Buru, they too had to wait out decades before their writings could be made public.

In the 2010s, things changed. Memoirs of detention reappeared on the bookstore shelves in Burma. Former political detainees published at length on their experiences as inmates. Printing houses republished all of the Cocos Island memoirs used for this chapter in 2012 and 2013, making them available to new generations of readers. These generations have since February 2021 been at the vanguard of a nationwide uprising against renewed military dictatorship. Those who survive will have their own harrowing stories of detention to tell, their own memoirs to write.

For now, here, the question remains as to how the Cocos Island memoirs might be made meaningful not only through the retelling of events on the

47 Zawana, in Ko Ko Lay, *Balèhè Kogo Kyun*, i–iii.

48 See generally Htet Myet, *Ahmaungduko Pyatthangyin*.

island, but also through a rewriting of Burma's political history from the standpoint of its so-called public enemies, and the many struggles for liberation of themselves, of their political community and of humanity from postcolonial state violence and oppression. That is to say, what would an account of political order in Burma at the start of 1960 look like if told through the prism of the experimental detention island, rather than from the mainland capital?

As nobody has yet written such a history, the question addresses, for now at least, a counterfactual. It points to work that remains to be done, as does the same question asked not only of other detention islands and the political orders that begat them in Asia's history, but of the global carceral archipelago in our time as well. Rereading the Cocos Island detainees' memoirs in the 2010s unavoidably brings to mind the experiences of detainees in the sites that today make up what Alison Mountz calls the 'enforcement archipelago' keeping migrants, asylum seekers and refugees out of destination countries in the name of state security.[49] Not only in its materiality does a site like Australia's Manus Island camp of 2012 to 2017 resemble Cocos, but also in its corresponding goals of expanding geographies of control and contracting spaces for rights; thus, the experimental island detention camp of the late settler colony seems to iterate features of its postcolonial predecessor.[50] In both cases governments were concerned to isolate bodies deemed threats to public order in juridically ambiguous ways, insisting on adherence to legal and administrative conventions while purposefully departing from them so as to deny opportunities for external oversight.[51] And in Manus, like Cocos before it, the ambiguities of experimental island detention brought forth struggles for liberation and memoirs of survival in conditions of adversity.[52]

So to rephrase the question, what might global political order in our time look like if viewed through the prism of the enforcement archipelago? To ask this question is not to insist, with Agamben, that the camp is paradigm of the modern.[53] Rather, it is to take the camp (as well as the prison) seriously as prism through which to view the relations between ostensibly ordinary political

49 Alison Mountz, 'The Enforcement Archipelago: Detention, Haunting, and Asylum on Islands', *Political Geography*, 30, no. 3 (2011), pp. 118–28.

50 See Andonea Dickson, 'Distancing Asylum Seekers from the State: Australia's Evolving Political Geography of Immmigration and Border Control', *Australian Geographer*, 46, no. 4 (2015), pp. 437–454.

51 See Ann Nethery and Rosa Holman, 'Secrecy and Human Rights Abuse in Australia's Offshore Immigration Detention Centres', *International Journal of Human Rights*, 20, no. 7 (2016), pp. 1018–1038.

52 For example, Behrouz Boochani, 'Incarceration, Autonomy and Resistance on Manus Island', *Arena Magazine*, 152 (February 2018). Available at: https://arena.org.au/incarceration-autonomy-and-resistance-on-manus-island-by-behrouz-boochani/.

53 Agamben, *Homo Sacer*.

orders and the exceptional conditions of detention that they create. It is to ask, how does the political community of Australia look if viewed from Manus? Or for that matter, what of the United States if viewed from Guantanamo Bay, or Western Europe from Lampedusa or perhaps Lindholm Island? And, to turn from the present towards the future, if the experimental detention island foreshadowed military dictatorship in Burma, then what kinds of political order do these experiments in island detention portend?

Acknowledgments

Thank you to Tomas Martin and colleagues at the Dignity Institute, Copenhagen for organising a panel on legacies of detention in Myanmar at the 2017 EuroSEAS conference, at Oxford University, where the audience heard some preliminary ideas that went into this chapter, as did the audience at the Asian Studies Association of Australia biennial conference at the University of Sydney, 2018. Thank you especially to Clare Anderson, Liv Stoltze Gaborit, Marija Grujić, Andrew Jefferson, Elliott Prasse-Freeman and Craig Reynolds for reading and commenting on drafts. Some of the secondary research that went into this chapter was completed in 2017 during a membership at the Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton. Primary research began much earlier, in the back of a house on Rangoon's outskirts, when in 2009 some of the Cocos Island memoirs tumbled from an overfull cabinet whose owner ordinarily kept it locked. Thanks to the avid book collector who lived in that house, U Shein Than, and others like him, who for half a century kept valuable books hidden from Burma's military dictatorship. For that commitment to preserve historically significant memoirs like those about Cocos Island, we should all be grateful.

References

Agamben, Giorgio, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. by Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998).

Anderson, Clare, *The Indian Uprising of 1857–8: Prisons, Prisoners and Rebellion* (London: Anthem, 2007).

Anderson, Clare, 'Sepoys, Servants and Settlers: Convict Transportation in the Indian Ocean, 1787–1945', in Frank Dikötter and Ian Brown (eds), *Cultures of Confinement: A History of the Prison in Africa, Asia and Latin America* (London: Hurst, 2007), pp. 185–220.

Anderson, Clare, Madhumita Mazumdar and Vishvajit Pandya, 'Introduction', in Clare Anderson, Madhumita Mazumdar and Vishvajit Pandya (eds), *New Histories of the Andaman Islands: Landscape, Place and Identity in the Bay of Bengal, 1790–2012* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), pp. 1–26.

Ang Cheng Guan, 'The Huong Lap and Phu Loi Incidents, and the Decision to Resume Armed Struggle in South Vietnam (January-April 1959)', *South East Asia Research*, 4, no. 1 (1996), pp. 3–22.

Anyeinza Taung Ayashi Tit-u, *Kogo Kyun yè Thweswan Hmattan* (Yangon: Yinmyo Book House, 2016).

Arnold, David, 'The Self and the Cell: Indian Prison Narratives as Life Histories', in David Arnold and Stuart Blackburn (eds), *Telling Lives in India: Biography, Autobiography, and Life History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), pp. 29–53.

Boochani, Behrouz, 'Incarceration, Autonomy and Resistance on Manus Island', *Arena Magazine*, 152 (February 2018). Available at: https://arena.org.au/incarceration-autonomy-and-resistance-on-manus-island-by-behrouz-boochani/.

Brown, Ian, 'A Commissioner Calls: Alexander Paterson and Colonial Burma's Prisons', *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 38, no. 2 (2007), pp. 293–308.

Burma (Union of) Government, *Is Trust Vindicated?* (Rangoon: Director of Information, 1960).

Charney, Michael, *A History of Modern Burma* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

Cheesman, Nick, *Opposing the Rule of Law: How Myanmar's Courts Make Law and Order* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

Chit Maung, *Taung Ayatha* (Rangoon: Journal Kyaw, 1939?).

Chit Yi, Maung, *Kogo Kyun hma Pôkma Nga* (Rangoon: U Saw Lwin, 1960).

De Vito, Christian, Clare Anderson and Ulbe Bosma, 'Transportation, Deportation and Exile: Perspectives from the Colonies in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries', *International Review of Social History*, 63, special issue 26 (2018), pp. 1–24.

Dickson, Andonea, 'Distancing Asylum Seekers from the State: Australia's Evolving Political Geography of Immmigration and Border Control', *Australian Geographer*, 46, no. 4 (2015), pp. 437–454.

Forth, Aidan, *Barbed-Wire Imperialism: Britain's Empire of Camps, 1876–1903* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2017).

Hla, Ludu U, *Sit, Achit hnin Taung* (Rangoon: Ludu News Press, 1960).

Hla, Ludu U, *Taung hnin Lutha* (Rangoon: Ludu News Press, 1957).

Htet Myet, *Ahmaungduko Pyatthangyin* (Yangon: Seitkugyogyo Books, 2nd edn, 2016).

India, Government (Home Department), *The Andaman Islands; with Notes on Barren Island* (Calcutta: Baptist Mission Press, 1859).

Ko Ko Lay, *Balèhè Kogo Kyun* (Rangoon: Khin Maung Yi & Sons, 1960).

Maung Maung, *Einzaung Azoya: Shudaung Acho hma Dimogayezi ko Santhatchin/Some Aspects of the 'Caretaker Government': An Experiment in Democratic Process* trans. by Sithu Kyaw (Yangon: Roads of Yangon Press, 2018).

Mountz, Alison, 'The Enforcement Archipelago: Detention, Haunting, and Asylum on Islands', *Political Geography I*, 30, no. 3 (2011), pp. 118–28.

Mya Than, Thakin, *Hnit Kyun Pyan Thanmani Hnit U* (Rangoon: [n.p.], 1960).

Myint Kyaw, *Kogo Kyun hma Zatlanmya* (Rangoon: Hatha Press, 1960).

Nethery, Ann and Rosa Holman, 'Secrecy and Human Rights Abuse in Australia's Offshore Immigration Detention Centres', *International Journal of Human Rights*, 20, no. 7 (2016), pp. 1018–1038.

Nu, Thakin, *Yetsetpa-pegwè* (Yangon: Sabelawga Book House, 4th edn, 2012 [1941]).

Roscoe, Katherine, 'A Natural Hulk: Australia's Carceral Islands in the Colonial Period, 1788–1901', *International Review of Social History*, 63, special issue 26 (2018), pp. 45–63.

Schmitt, Carl, *The Concept of the Political*, trans. by George Schwab (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

Tinker, Hugh, *The Union of Burma: A Study of the First Years of Independence* (London: Oxford University Press, 4th edn, 1967).

Vaidik, Aparna, *Imperial Andamans: Colonial Encounter and Island History* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

Zinoman, Peter, *The Colonial Bastille: A History of Imprisonment in Vietnam, 1862–1940* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

CHAPTER 5

Arbitrary Detention in Indonesia: Buru Prison Island, 1969–1979

Ken M.P. Setiawan

Abstract

Between 1969 and 1979 Indonesia's New Order regime consigned some 12,000 leftist political prisoners to a penal settlement on the island of Buru in eastern Indonesia. The prisoners were sent there without trial as part of a mass detention campaign undertaken by the state security organisation, Kopkamtib. Once on the island, they were expected to create a new, viable settlement by clearing jungle and planting crops. The authorities had no intention of releasing the prisoners, but rather expected then to settle on the island for good. In order to enhance the 'normalcy' of the settlement, the authorities persuaded and coerced the families of some prisoners to move to Buru. Although conditions were better in Savanajaya, the settlement allocated to families, than in other parts of the penal colony, the family members of detainees were subject to many of the same rules of detention. Prisoners and their families suffered both from difficult conditions on Buru and from harsh ill-treatment by camp guards. Under international pressure, the New Order regime dismantled the settlement in 1979, and most of the detainees returned to Java.

Keywords

Indonesian Communist Party – Buru Island – detention without trial – penal settlement – transmigration – camp guards – political prisoners – *tahanan politik* – detention camps

Over six months in late 1965 and early 1966, the Indonesian military took control of government and established the New Order regime which lasted until 1998. During this seizure of power, the military instigated a violent campaign against members of the Indonesian Communist Party (Partai Komunis

©

Indonesia, PKI) and its affiliate organisations. It has been estimated that the army and military-backed vigilante groups killed approximately 500,000 people in this attack.[1] Many more people were imprisoned without trial, often for lengthy periods of time.

In comparison with the mass killings, mass detention has received limited attention in scholarship on the 1965 violence. Detention policies, however, were a key part of the attack on the political left.[2] This chapter looks at the largest site of political detention under the New Order, the prison camp on the island of Buru in the Maluku archipelago. Between 1969 and 1979 approximately 12,000 male political prisoners (*tahanan politik* or *tapol*) were held on Buru, along with a few hundred women and children who were transported to the island to join their imprisoned relatives. Buru gained particular notoriety for its remote location and harsh conditions of detention. The Indonesian authorities, by contrast, never referred to Buru as a place of detention and instead portrayed it as a resettlement area. Those who were sent to Buru were not expected to return to Java. Instead it was envisaged that they would stay forever to build a new society on the island.[3]

The relocation of women and children to Buru to join their imprisoned husbands and fathers was a key element in this resettlement strategy. The presence of families enabled the authorities to portray the penal colony as a part of the broader transmigration policy which shifted people from Java and Madura to other islands. In practice, however, family members were treated as fellow detainees on the same basis as the male political prisoners, rather than as free settlers.

1 Robert Cribb, 'Introduction: Problems in the Historiography of the Killings in Indonesia', in *The Indonesian Killings 1965–1966: Studies from Java and Bali*, ed. Robert Cribb (Clayton, Vic.: Monash University Centre of Southeast Asian Studies, 1990), p. 1.

2 Douglas Kammen and Faizah Zakaria, 'Detention in Mass Violence. Policy and Practice in Indonesia, 1965–1968,' *Critical Asian Studies* 44, 3 (2012), p. 442.

3 Ken Setiawan, 'Remembering Suffering and Survival: Sites of Memory on Buru', in Katharine McGregor, Jess Melvin and Annie Pohlman (eds), *The Indonesian Genocide of 1965. Causes, Dynamics and Legacies* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), pp. 215–216.

MAP 5.1
Political prisoner settlements on Buru Island, Indonesia. (FROM ROBERT CRIBB, *DIGITAL ATLAS OF INDONESIAN HISTORY* (COPENHAGEN, NIAS PRESS, 2010), REPRODUCED WITH PERMISSION)

1 The Killings of 1965–1966 and the Destruction of the Indonesian Left

The establishment of Buru's prison camp had its roots in the mass violence that swept across Indonesia after 1 October 1965. A group calling itself *Gerakan Tiga Puluh September* (G30S or 30th September Movement) kidnapped and killed six generals and a lieutenant of the Indonesian army. This movement declared that its actions were to prevent a coup attempt against President Sukarno. The army, under the leadership of Army Strategic Reserve commander Major-General Suharto, quickly crushed the movement. The army then declared that the PKI, its main political rival at the time, had been responsible for the abduction and murder of the generals. Subsequently, the anti-communist leadership of the army seized control of the media, orchestrating an intense propaganda campaign against the PKI. Not only was the party blamed for the Jakarta coup, but

party members were accused of planning to slaughter their non-communist neighbours in the next stage of an alleged grab for power. This propaganda against the PKI facilitated both the military's rise to power and the destruction of the Indonesian left as a political force in Indonesia.[4]

Just days after the alleged coup, violence started against members and sympathisers of the PKI. Whereas senior leaders of the PKI were targeted for arrest, most of those killed in 1965–1966 were not main political figures. Instead, those who were victimised were poor and lower-middle-class people who had been members of the party or its affiliated organisations. At the time, these organisations were both legal and popular: the PKI and affiliated organisations were not banned until 1966.[5] Killings occurred throughout Indonesia, but were particularly intense in Central and East Java, Bali, Aceh, North Sumatra and parts of Nusa Tenggara.[6] Estimates of how many people were killed range from 78,500 to 3 million. The uncertainty about the exact number killed can be explained by several factors, including the short time frame in which the killings were carried out, the disposal of bodies in unmarked graves, and the fact that those responsible were in power in the many years that followed, and could thus prevent serious investigation into the killings. Indifference concerning the killing of communists on the part of Western states, international organisations and the media in the context of the Cold War also played a role. Despite these difficulties, there is scholarly consensus that the number of people killed is approximately 500,000.[7]

Mass incarceration was directly related to the killings, as most of those killed were first detained. Detainees lived in constant fear of being 'borrowed' (*dibon*), a term used for being taken out of their place of detention to be killed.[8] (See also the Melvin and Pohlman chapters in this volume.) Most detentions occurred in the immediate aftermath of the G30S coup, although they continued well into the 1970s. As is the case with the killings, there are no exact figures for the number of persons detained after the 1965 events. In the 1970s, the Indonesian military authorities stated that the number was 600,000–750,000, but Amnesty International put the figure at around 1 million. In the early 1980s, the Indonesian government suggested that there were 1.5 to 1.7 million former prisoners, a figure that may have been intended to keep fear of 'communism'

4 Harold Crouch, *The Army and Politics in Indonesia* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1978), pp. 135–137.

5 Geoffrey Robinson, *The Killing Season: A History of the Indonesian Massacres, 1965–66* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018), p. 122.

6 Ibid., p. 134.

7 Ibid., pp. 120–121.

8 Hersri Setiawan, *Kamus Gestok* (Yogyakarta: Galang Press, 2003), p. 37.

in society alive.[9] Among the detainees were many leading political, intellectual and cultural figures, but most were ordinary people, held because of their actual, or perceived, membership or association with the left.[10]

2 The Establishment of Buru's Prison Camp

After October 1965 Indonesia had one of the largest populations of political detainees in the world. The large number of persons languishing in detention posed both economic and political dilemmas for the New Order government. From an economic perspective, overcrowded detention centres strained the government budget, leading the government to pursue more cost-effective ways to detain individuals. From a political point of view, the presence of political detainees undermined the objectives of the administration to present itself as adhering to the rule of law.[11] The presence of *tapol* on Java, Indonesia's political centre, was also deemed undesirable ahead of the first elections in 1971, in which the New Order wanted to portray itself as a democratic regime.[12] Ironically, the desire of the new administration to portray itself as an orderly state that adhered to the rule of law – in contrast to the alleged 'chaos' of the Sukarno administration – led to the further violation of rights.

A key role in the administration of prisoners was played by the state security agency Kopkamtib (*Komando Operasi Pemulihan Keamanan dan Ketertiban*, Operations Command to Restore Security and Order), which was established in mid-October 1965. Headed by Suharto, Kopkamtib was mandated to track down and arrest PKI supporters. In November 1965, Kopkamtib first introduced a categorisation of prisoners to facilitate their processing.[13] A 1966 Presidential Instruction determined that this categorisation would be used as the basis for formal classification for long-term detention.[14] Detainees were placed in one of three categories (A, B and C), according to their alleged degree of involvement in the 30th September Movement. Category A prisoners were considered to have been involved in the movement, because of their

9 Cribb, 'Introduction', p. 42.
10 Robinson, *The Killing Season*, pp. 210–211.
11 Todung Mulya Lubis, *In Search of Human Rights. Legal-Political Dilemmas of Indonesia's New Order, 1966–1990* (Jakarta: PT Gramedia Pustaka Utama), p. 127.
12 David Jenkins, *Suharto and his Generals. Indonesian Military Politics 1975–1983* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell Modern Indonesia Project, 1984), pp. 37–39.
13 Kammen and Zakaria, 'Detention in Mass Violence', pp. 446–447.
14 Jess Melvin, *The Army and the Indonesian Genocide: Mechanics of Mass Murder* (London: Routledge, 2018), p. 273.

participation or involvement in the planning, or because they knew of the plans but failed to report this information to the authorities. The exact number of suspects in this category is unclear, but it appears to have been not more than a couple of dozen. Sixteen Category A prisoners were subjected to military trials which, despite the appearance of a judicial process, were a sham. None of the defendants was acquitted; thirteen were sentenced to death and three to life imprisonment.[15] Category B prisoners comprised active members of the PKI or leaders of associated organisations not directly linked to the movement. Category C prisoners, who comprised the vast majority of detainees, were ordinary members and sympathisers of the PKI and affiliated organisations.[16] Although in practice most Category C prisoners were released after relatively short periods of detention, the categorisation of prisoners did not include guidelines on how long detention would last.[17] Category B and C detainees were never placed on trial.

Category B prisoners were most problematic for the authorities. There was not enough evidence to put them on trial like Category A detainees, but as they were considered a security risk, release was also not the option it was for Category C. In 1968, Kopkamtib issued a 'Policy for the Solution for Prisoners/Detainees of G30S PKI' (*Kebijaksanaan Penyelesaian Tahanan/Tawanan G30S PKI*).[18] This policy stipulated that prisoners could be subjected to re-education, labour and resettlement through transmigration. The term transmigration referred to the government-sponsored resettlement of people from densely populated Java and Madura to other, more sparsely populated islands. Transmigration had commenced in the colonial period and was intended both to relieve population pressure in Java and Madura and to promote government-approved economic development in other regions. The Dutch colonial authorities had occasionally used penal settlements as a form of transmigration and had even identified Buru as a potential site for such a settlement.[19] Resettlement camps were then established throughout the archipelago, with Buru – some 3,000 kilometres away from Jakarta – the largest of

15 Daniel S. Lev, *No Concessions. The Life of Yap Thiam Hien, Indonesian Human Rights Lawyer* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2011), p. 233.

16 Katharine McGregor, 'Mass Violence in the Indonesian Transition from Sukarno to Suharto', *Global Dialogue* 15, 1 (2013), pp. 138–139.

17 Kammen and Zakaria, 'Detention in Mass Violence', p. 450.

18 PELAK-002/KOPKAM/10/1968, in *Himpunan Surat-Surat Keputusan/Perintah jang Berhubungan dengan Kopkamtib 1965 s/d 1969* (Jakarta: Sekretariat Kopkamtib, 1970), unpaginated.

19 Robert Cribb, 'Convict Exile and Penal Settlement in Colonial Indonesia', *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History*, 18, no. 3 (2017), doi:10.1353/cch.2017.0043.

these sites of detention. By placing detainees in camps where they would eventually be self-sufficient, the government anticipated that it would be able to reduce its spending on political detention. In designating Buru a site of 'special transmigration', the government both framed the relocation of prisoners in the context of its policies to ease overpopulation on Java, and masked the fact that the settlement of detainees was forced, giving them no option to return to Java.[20] The purpose of the camps was to remove from Indonesian society those who were "tainted by communism" and to provide an environment in which "communist beliefs could be purged from the minds of the detainees" by means of re-education.[21]

Kopkamtib had explored the possibility of developing Buru as a prison camp as early as 1967, when it sent a delegation to the island. This delegation recommended the island for a prison camp because of its remoteness and dense jungle, which formed a natural barrier to escape attempts. It noted, too, that the island had great potential for agricultural development.[22] Government propaganda emphasised the humane intention of moving prisoners to Buru.[23] Attorney-General Soegih Arto argued that the removal of prisoners from Java was in their best interests, suggesting that their safety would be at risk if they returned to their former communities because of anti-communist sentiments there.[24]

The establishment of Buru's prison camp was decided at the highest levels of military and political leadership. In February 1969, President Suharto – in his capacity as Kopkamtib Commander – officially designated Buru as a resettlement area for Category B prisoners.[25] Responsibility for the camp was given to the Attorney-General's Office, which in turn delegated the task to the Buru Resettlement Implementation Body (*Badan Pelaksanaan* Resettlement *Pulau Buru*, Bapreru). Responsibility for day-to-day operations was in the hands of the commander of the army's Pattimura Division, the regional military command in Ambon.[26] The chain of command in the camp itself was one of strict military hierarchy, with middle-ranking officers (colonel or lieutenant-colonel)

20 K. Setiawan, 'Remembering Suffering,' p. 219.

21 I.G. Krisnadi, *Tahanan Politik Pulau Buru 1969–1979* (Jakarta: LP3ES, 2001), p. 100.

22 Ibid., pp. 93–97.

23 Djamal Marsudi, *Laporan Pertama dari Pulau Buru* (Jakarta: PT. Intibuku Utama, 1971), p. 51.

24 Ibid., p. 47.

25 Kep-009/KOPKAMTIB/2/1969, in *Himpunan Surat-Surat Keputusan/Perintah jang Berhubungan dengan Kopkamtib 1965 s/d 1969*.

26 Ita F. Nadia et al., 'Laporan Akhir Tim Pengkajian Pelanggaran HAM Berat Soeharto (Sub-Tim Pengkajian Kasus 1965)', in Baskara T. Wardaya (ed.), *Luka Bangsa Luka Kita: Pelanggaran HAM Masa Lalu dan Tawaran Rekonsiliasi* (Yogyakarta: Galang Pustaka, 2014), p. 294.

appointed as camp commanders and lower-ranked officers put in charge of the daily needs of personnel as well as the command of individual prison units. Below these officers were the soldiers who guarded the camp.[27]

3 'A New Life'

In 1969, on 17 August – Independence Day – the first 850 political prisoners were transported from Jakarta to Buru in an army ship. During the journey, which took about a week, prisoners were congratulated by the guards on the 'new life' (*hidup baru*) that awaited them.[28] Upon the prisoners' arrival in Namlea, the main town on the island, prisoners were allowed to rest briefly, before being forced to run four kilometres to Jiku Kecil, the transit camp where they were informed of their obligations and tasks. They were then sent to the site of their respective settlements along the Wai Apo river and its tributaries. There they had to build their own barracks and other buildings to be used by the camp authorities.[29] In the years that followed, prisoners were moved from Java to Buru on a regular basis. These transports occurred in secret and under heavy military guard. Although prisoners had an inkling of where they were being taken, they were not told about their destination and were unable to notify their families beforehand.[30]

Although officially only B-category prisoners were to be sent to Buru, prisoners in A and C categories were often added in order to reach the number of prisoners targeted for each transport.[31] Policy stated that those sent to Buru should be younger than forty-five years and in good health. In practice, however, the age range of the prisoners was twenty to seventy years and those transported included sick prisoners. A handful of minors was also sent to the island. Ten-year old Asmuni was asked by his mother to look for his father in a detention centre. When he found his father, he did not want to go home and so he accompanied his father to Buru. Another boy, Sugeng, was only fourteen when he was sent to Buru, accused by the local police of being a member of the PKI youth wing.[32]

---

27 Ibid., pp. 294–297.

28 Pramoedya Ananta Toer, *Nyanyi Sunyi Seorang Bisu: Catatan-catatan dari Pulau Buru* (Jakarta: Lentera, 1995), pp. 12–13.

29 Krisnadi, *Tahanan Politik*, p. 106.

30 Hersri Setiawan, *Buru Island: A Prison Memoir* (Clayton, Vic.: Monash University Publishing, 2020), p. 45.

31 Mars Noersmono, *Bertahan Hidup di Pulau Buru* (Bandung: Ultimus, 2017), p. 9.

32 Krisnadi, *Tahanan Politik*, p. 91.

In late 1972, Kopkamtib officials reported that 10,652 persons had been sent to the island, including a small number of families.[33] In 1976, Kopkamtib stated that there were 11,085 prisoners on Buru.[34] Taking into account that deportations to the island continued until early 1977, it is likely that the total number of people sent to Buru was around 12,000, though Amnesty International suggested the number was 'about 14,000'.[35] The number of 12,000 used in this chapter is thus a conservative estimate, until new evidence proves otherwise.

Over time, Buru's prison camp complex would cover 3,000 square kilometres, or approximately one-third of the total surface of the island.[36] In the complex, there were twenty-two prison units, most of which held around 500 detainees, although a few were larger. Each unit was guarded by thirty to forty soldiers.[37] In each unit, there were ten barracks for prisoners, as well as a house for the unit commander and a barrack for the guards. There were also several storehouses and workshops, as well as a place of worship and a polyclinic. Every prison unit on Buru, with the exception of the isolation (punishment) unit, also had an arts barracks (*barak kesenian*), used for cultural performances, that could seat more than 500 people.[38]

Prison units in some ways resembled small villages. Camp authorities were keen to create a humane image of Buru. They did this, amongst other measures, by renaming the camp in 1972 from 'Place of Utilisation' to *Instalasi Rehabilitasi* (Rehabilitation Installation).[39] The Roman numerals that identified prison units were also replaced by names. Thus, Unit III became Wanayasa and Unit XIV Bantalareja. In 1974, camp authorities ordered that prisoners should be referred to as 'members' (*warga*) rather than 'detainees' (*tahanan*).[40]

These policies all served to distract attention from the fact that Buru was a place of detention, where conditions were very harsh. Prisoners provided forced labour: all prison units and the roads connecting them, as well as bridges and dams, were constructed by prisoners under heavy military surveillance. With only basic tools, prisoners were forced to work long hours to clear the jungle and prepare the land for cultivation. Every unit was to cultivate between fifty and 300 hectares of rice, and up to one hundred hectares of other crops including corn, cassava and vegetables.

---

33 Ibid., p. 105.
34 Amnesty International, *Indonesia* (London: Amnesty International, 1977), p. 36.
35 Ibid., p. 91.
36 Krisnadi, *Tahanan Politik*, p. 97.
37 Ibid., p. 107.
38 K. Setiawan, 'Remembering Suffering,' p. 225.
39 Krisnadi, *Tahanan Politik*, p. 106.
40 Hersri Setiawan, *Diburu di Pulau Buru* (Yogyakarta: Galang Press, 2006), p. 164.

The cultivation of rice and other crops was part of prisoners becoming self-sufficient so that the settlement would no longer have to rely on supplies from outside. The food produced by prisoners was crucial for their survival as the rations provided by the camp authorities were minimal. Prisoners rarely consumed rice, and instead relied on sago which they had to find for themselves.[41] Searching for additional food was a constant preoccupation of prisoners, who ate snakes, insect larvae, snails and rats to survive.[42] Camp guards often seized the crops cultivated by the prisoners and other products, such as timber harvested by the detainees in the forests, sometimes consuming these products themselves, sometimes selling them in the local market.[43]

Prisoners also suffered from inadequate healthcare. The government allocated only 400 Rupiah per prisoner (US$1) for medical supplies for a period of eight months after their arrival. Disease was common in the camp; detainees suffered from malaria, tuberculosis, skin infections and various alimentary problems.[44] In an unpublished report from 1974, the International Committee of the Red Cross stated that it found 'sufficient quantities [...] of antibiotics, disinfectants, antimalarial drugs, vitamins, etc.'[45] in polyclinics when it visited the camp. However, former prisoners have stated that these were 'of course not made available to *tapol*',[46] who instead relied on herbal tonics (*jamu*) prepared with leaves and roots.[47] There were instances in which prisoners who complained about stomach aches were 'treated' with a beating by the guards, while those suffering from malaria were told to run laps until they fainted.[48]

It is estimated that around 320 prisoners died in Buru's prison camps, mainly from illness.[49] Psychological burdens led some prisoners to take their own life.[50] As in other detention camps, the only means available to the guards to enforce camp regulations and punish indiscipline was physical violence. Torture, and other forms of inhumane treatment, thus occurred regularly. *Tapol* had to be 'prepared to be slapped, hit, kicked, tied to and dragged by a cart, stand for hours in the scorching sun or to have boiling water poured

41 Noersmono, *Bertahan Hidup*, p. 35.
42 H. Setiawan, *Buru Island*, p. 272.
43 Krisnadi, *Tahanan Politik*, pp. 120–121.
44 Amnesty International, *Indonesia*, p. 94.
45 'Report on the Camps for Political Prisoners on the Island of Buru', 1974, p. 10, B AG 225 097–018, Archives du Comité international de la Croix-Rouge, Geneva.
46 Noersmono, *Bertahan Hidup*, p. 32.
47 Ibid., p. 33.
48 Hersri, 'Art and Entertainment in the New Order's Jails,' *Indonesia* 59 (1995), p. 15.
49 Krisnadi, *Tahanan Politik*, p. 204.
50 Interview conducted by the author with Alexander Dirjosutanto, a Catholic priest who worked on Buru between 1976 and 1979 (Jakarta, 24 May 2016).

over them'.[51] This happened, for instance, when prisoners attempted to escape, when they were caught violating camp rules (e.g., reading material that had not been passed by the camp censoring body), or when detainees' work was not to the liking of the camp authorities. The guards also abused prisoners psychologically, for instance by conducting roll calls facing graveyards, to give prisoners a 'fright and to crush [their] spirit'.[52] In serious cases, the guards imposed collective punishment on prisoners, perhaps in retaliation for offences, perhaps in the hope that prisoners would restrain each other from acts of indiscipline. In October 1972, prisoners killed a guard from Unit V (Wanakarta) after he had stolen eggs from them. Three prisoners fled, but the camp authorities retaliated by torturing all prisoners in the unit that night, leaving eleven dead. In other units, prisoners were also punished by not being allowed to leave their barracks for ten days except for roll calls. This also meant that they were unable to work in the fields and thus could not feed themselves. Because a prisoner who worked at carpentry had killed the guard in Unit V, other carpenters in the camp were also tortured.[53]

4 Sins of the Family: Expanding the Scope of Arbitrary Detention

The detention camp system for Category B prisoners kept men and women suspects separate. Many women were held, for instance, in Plantungan camp in Java. Buru was designated as a camp for male detainees, but hundreds of women and children were transported there to join their husbands and fathers. Examining the lived experiences of women and children is important because it leads to differentiation in how to understand the experiences of victims and survivors and is crucial in comprehending the patterns and legacies of mass violence.[54]

Several considerations underpinned the settlement of families with the male detainees on Buru. One was the argument that the state ideology, Pancasila, demanded that the government embody 'a just and civilised humanity' (*kemanusiaan yang adil dan beradab*).[55] Under the New Order, Pancasila (which

51 Krisnadi, *Tahanan Politik*, p. 112.

52 H. Setiawan, *Buru Island*, p. 110.

53 H. Setiawan, *Diburu*, pp. 133–134.

54 Annie Pohlman, 'Child-raising, Childbirth and Abortion *In Extremis*: Women's Stories of Caring for and Losing Children during the Violence of 1965–1966 in Indonesia', *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs* 3 (2013), p. 112.

55 Krisnadi, *Tahanan Politik*, p. 108.

had been closely associated with Sukarno) was appropriated by the regime to provide it with historical legitimacy. In reclaiming Pancasila, the Suharto regime steadily removed its resonances with the Sukarno regime, instead imbuing it 'with the traditional familistic spirit'.[56] Bringing family members to Buru was thus considered to be in line with the underlying principles of the state and was an essential part of embedding the settlement as an enduring and self-reproducing community.

Some politicians argued that transporting a large number of prisoners to Buru exposed both the guards and the island's local population to communist and leftist ideas. Member of Parliament Imam Rosjadi argued that this meant Buru could become a 'Red Island'.[57] If, however, family members joined the detainees on Buru, risks of prisoners socialising with the local population would be reduced. At the same time, bringing the family members of leftists to Buru would remove from Java people who might otherwise be 'thorns in society',[58] harbouring either leftist ideas or at least antagonism to the government. The relocation of family members would thus contribute to cleansing Indonesian society of leftist ideologies while also maintaining a narrative of the latent danger of communism.[59] Accordingly, the authorities initially intended to establish a settlement of 50,000 people on Buru, consisting of 20,000 political prisoners and 30,000 family members.[60]

The first group of family members arrived on Buru on 23 July 1972, two and a half years after the first arrival of male detainees. The newcomers were housed in Unit IV, which was renamed Savanajaya. From that time, Savanajaya was used only for families, with single men sent to stay in other units. While the experiences of Buru *tapol* are reasonably well-documented through a number of survivor memoirs, less is known about the women and children who went to Buru. Exceptions are the autobiographical accounts *Diburu di Pulau Buru* (2006) and *Buru Island: A Prison Memoir* (2020) by Buru survivor Hersri Setiawan,[61] which describe in some detail the experiences of the families

56 David Bourchier, *Illiberal Democracy in Indonesia: The Ideology of the Family State* (London: Routledge, 2015), p. 140.

57 Krisnadi, *Tahanan Politik*, p. 95.

58 Marsudi, *Laporan Pertama*, p. 47.

59 Ariel Heryanto, *State Terrorism and Political Identity in Indonesia: Fatally Belonging* (London: Routledge, 2006), pp. 18, 34.

60 Greg Fealy, *The Release of Indonesia's Political Prisoners: Domestic Versus Foreign Policy, 1975–1979* (Clayton, Vic.: Monash Asia Institute, 1995), p. 7.

61 Hersri Setiawan, a former chairperson of LEKRA (*Lembaga Kebudayaan Rakyat*, Institute of People's Culture) in Central Java, was held on Buru between 1971 and 1978. In 1972, he was detained in Unit XIV (Bantalareja), close to Savanajaya where *tapol* families were settled. This meant he was directly involved in the development of the village.

in Savanajaya. Setiawan estimates that some 240 families were housed in Savanajaya.[62] The large majority of these families were brought to the island from Java, while approximately thirty families were moved to Savanajaya by the camp authorities as a result of marriages between *tapol* and daughters of fellow prisoners, or between *tapol* and local women.[63] The military authorities encouraged these marriages so that prisoners would firmly settle (and thus remain) on Buru. During the marriage ceremony, prisoners and their new wives were required to promise that they would remain on Buru.[64]

The camp authorities invited the domestic press to witness the first arrival of families on Buru. The 'rice paddies and rows of ordered and clean houses were attractive propaganda material for the families who were yet to come'.[65] However, the reality was that very few women wanted to go to Buru. A 1971 government survey showed that seventy percent of *tapol* wives interviewed did not want to go to Buru.[66] Prisoners also generally dismissed the idea: 'while separation from their families is one of the most intolerable aspects of their existence, they realise that life on Buru is totally unacceptable to and far too arduous for their wives and children'.[67]

As Setiawan writes, however, some women 'came because they were pressured and forced to do so. They were persuaded, frightened, threatened'.[68] Local military authorities played a crucial role in persuading women to go to Buru. Sometimes women were made false promises, as happened with Sri Rahayu, a school principal whose husband was sent to Buru. Staff from Koramil (*Komando Rayon Militer*, Local Military Command) in Jakarta urged her to go to Buru because the primary school needed a principal and the junior high school was looking for teachers. They then showed her 'many photos of Buru and the life of *tapol*. Fertile land, an abundance of rice and other crops, dense forests, a bustling local market, well-built houses and beautiful villages'.[69] Others agreed with the demands of the security forces in order to escape sexual violence. After the arrest of her husband, for instance, Bandiyah was repeatedly raped by Koramil staff in Kendal, Central Java. When she arrived on Buru, her husband was surprised to see she had brought four children with her. Bandiyah told her

62 H. Setiawan, *Buru Island*, p. 213.
63 H. Setiawan, *Diburu*, pp. 143–144.
64 Komnas Perempuan, *Gender-Based Crimes Against Humanity. Listening to the Voices of Women Survivors of 1965* (Jakarta: Komnas Perempuan, 2007), pp. 139–140.
65 H. Setiawan, *Diburu*, p. 124.
66 K. Setiawan, 'Remembering Suffering,' p. 222.
67 Amnesty International, *Indonesia*, p. 97.
68 H. Setiawan, *Diburu*, p. 122.
69 Ibid., p. 131.

husband that 'she wanted to be free from all forms of pressure and threats, so that she no longer had to give birth to children she did not want'.[70]

The prisoners whose families came to Buru left their respective units to relocate to Savanajaya. On these occasions, camp authorities congratulated them and said they had 'won the lottery (*menang lotere*)'. These prisoners were given soap, new work clothes and five kilograms of rice – luxuries in the camp. In Savanajaya each family was allocated a furnished house, as well as 6,000 square metres of planted wet rice fields and 4,000 square metres of dry land planted with corn and cassava. During an initial consolidation period of up to nine months, families were also given rice and bulgur. In addition, they were given other crops and tools to work the land, as well as household items.[71]

The arrival of families and the establishment of the village of Savanajaya suggested a sense of normalcy on Buru. Some other *tapol* began to ask their families to come to the island. However, living on Buru and working as farmers was for many families 'a world that was completely foreign'.[72] Many of them had no experience of agriculture before they arrived. Although families were reunited, they lived in detention: the men remained *tapol*. Setiawan notes that this situation led to frequent disagreements and confrontations between families and the camp administration. Women and children were not prisoners, but found their movements were restricted, as they were not allowed to go to other prison units or villages (for instance to visit the market) without written permission from the authorities in Savanajaya. Guards found reasons to interrogate, abuse and torture women, as well as children, when they were deemed old enough.[73] Sometimes this took the form of demanding that children do push-ups before being allowed to continue on their way (e. g., on the way to school). There have also been testimonies of young girls who were sexually harassed and abused.[74] Prisoners were also sometimes punished instead of their children. The father of 'AH' was beaten after his daughter was caught smuggling malaria medication from Namlea, where she went to school, to Savanjaya: '[…] my father was taken away to the post. He was beaten and when he got back he was unrecognisable'.[75] In October 1972, after prisoners killed a guard in Unit V (Wanakarta), the prisoners in Savanajaya were subject to the same disciplinary measures as prisoners in other units. Describing the effect of this measures on children, Setiawan wrote:

70 Ibid., p. 130.
71 Ibid., pp. 121–124.
72 Ibid., p. 130.
73 Ibid., *Diburu*, p. 127.
74 Komnas Perempuan, *Gender-Based Crimes*, p. 139.
75 Ibid., p. 137.

> when they heard the bell for the roll call, they felt the heartbeats of their parents surge in worry. Children saw their uncles[76] lined up, hit and forced to stand in the glaring sun for hours. They knew that both their parents and older siblings were not allowed to go to the fields or to school. These children felt that they were not free, even to urinate or defecate. They came to understand the meaning of love and hate. They became aware about freedom and how it was restricted.[77]

The experiences of women and children on Buru show that it was not political prisoners alone who were victimised by New Order policies to transport detainees to prison camps. Victimisation extended to their families: although women and children arrived on Buru officially as free people, in practice their movements were curtailed, they were on occasion subjected to harsh treatment, and they lived under constant military surveillance.

Between 1977 and 1979, Buru's prison camp was gradually dismantled. This policy was primarily the result of international pressure on Indonesia. The authorities, however, also believed that if prisoners returned to their former places of residence, local communities would be able to monitor them.[78] Prisoners were officially not released but 'returned to society (*dikembalikan ke masyarakat*)'.[79] Upon their return, the political and employment rights of former detainees were restricted and they were required to report regularly to the authorities.[80]

Nearly 300 prisoners stayed behind on Buru, most of them heads of families in Savanajaya. Camp authorities had classified these families as 'transmigrants' and the government refused to support their return to Java on the grounds that they had already been resettled. For these detainees, the only way of return was for them to pay their own costs. It has been estimated that 160 families were able to do so, after selling most of their belongings: 'we sold whatever we had, whatever would sell. We just abandoned our homes, rice fields, etc.'[81]

Like the prisoners who were returned to Java, those who remained on Buru were subjected to various restrictions. Although these rules were lifted after the fall of the New Order in 1998, many former *tapol* and their families on Buru

---

76 Children on Buru referred to *tapol* as *paklik*, Javanese for uncle. See H. Setiawan, *Diburu*, 123.

77 Ibid., p. 134.

78 Krisnadi, *Tahanan Politik*, p. 203.

79 H. Setiawan, *Diburu*, p. 225.

80 Robinson, *The Killing Season*, pp. 248–252.

81 Komnas Perempuan, *Gender-Based Crimes*, pp. 139–140.

continue to experience occasional discriminatory practices because of their presumed association with the PKI.[82] These experiences reflect the fact that the New Order state treated association with the left as an inheritable or generational sin (*dosa turunan*).[83] Even people not yet born in 1965 live with a strong social stigma.

5 Conclusion

Between 1969 and 1979 Buru's prison camp was the largest site of arbitrary detention under the New Order regime. The incarceration of political prisoners was arbitrary because there was no evidence that *tapol* had committed an offence and they were not given due process. Rather, they were sent to Buru because they had been allocated to one of the categories devised by the security agency, Kopkamtib, for classifying leftists accused of some association with the Jakarta coup of October 1965. Their so-called resettlement to Buru was cast as a benevolent act – removing them from an allegedly hostile social environment in Java and giving them an opportunity to make a living in a fresh environment. They were settled in Buru, however, without their consent and the duration of their detention was indefinite. *Tapol* had no avenue at all to appeal their fate, which instead was entirely controlled by the political and military authorities, especially the all-powerful Kopkamtib. Conditions on the island, moreover, were physically difficult, and the prisoners suffered ill-treatment at the hands of guards.

Detention on Buru encompassed more than political prisoners. Women and children were transported to the island to join their husbands and fathers, on the grounds that family life was a necessary part of social stability, in line with the state ideology, Pancasila. The transportation of these women and children was also done to counter the spread of communism and other leftist ideologies. The authorities hoped that transporting women and children to Buru would remove 'unwanted' elements of society far from the political centre of the regime, Java. The detention policy came to an end primarily because of international pressure, but the Buru project could be abandoned in 1979 because the political authority of the New Order in Java was by then relatively secure. Even so, former detainees suffered discrimination for decades afterwards.

82 K. Setiawan, 'Remembering Suffering,' p. 223.

83 Robinson, *The Killing Season*, p. 251.

References

Amnesty International, *Indonesia* (London: Amnesty International, 1977).

Bourchier, David, *Illiberal Democracy in Indonesia: The Ideology of the Family State* (New York: Routledge, 2015).

Cribb, Robert, 'Introduction: Problems in the Historiography of the Killings in Indonesia', in Robert Cribb (ed.), *The Indonesian Killings 1965–1966: Studies from Java and Bali* (Clayton, Vic.: Monash University Centre of Southeast Asian Studies, 1990), pp. 1–44.

Crouch, Harold, *The Army and Politics in Indonesia* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1978).

Fealy, Greg, *The Release of Indonesia's Political Prisoners: Domestic Versus Foreign Policy, 1975–1979* (Clayton, Vic.: Monash Asia Institute, 1995).

Hersri, 'Art and Entertainment in the New Order's Jails', *Indonesia*, 59 (1995), pp. 1–20.

Heryanto, Ariel, *State Terrorism and Political Identity in Indonesia: Fatally Belonging* (London: Routledge, 2006).

Himpunan Surat-Surat Keputusan/Perintah jang Berhubungan dengan Kopkamtib 1965 s/d 1969 (Jakarta: Sekretariat Kopkamtib, 1970).

Jenkins, David, *Suharto and his Generals. Indonesian Military Politics 1975–1983* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell Modern Indonesia Project, 1984).

Kammen, Douglas and Faizah Zakaria, 'Detention in Mass Violence. Policy and Practice in Indonesia', *Critical Asian* Studies 44, 3 (2012), pp. 441–466.

Krisnadi, I.G., *Tahanan Politik Pulau Buru 1969–1979* (Jakarta: LP3ES, 2001).

Komnas Perempuan, *Gender-Based Crimes Against Humanity. Listening to the Voices of Women Survivors of 1965* (Jakarta: Komnas Perempuan, 2007).

Lev, Daniel S., *No Concessions. The Life of Yap Thiam Hien, Indonesian Human Rights Lawyer* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2011).

Lubis, Todung Mulya, *In Search of Human Rights. Legal-Political Dilemmas of Indonesia's New Order, 1966–1990* (Jakarta: PT Gramedia Pustaka Utama, 1993).

Marsudi, Djamal, *Laporan Pertama dari Pulau Buru* (Djakarta: PT. Intibuku Utama, 1971).

Melvin, Jess, *The Army and the Indonesian Genocide: Mechanics of Mass Murder* (London: Routledge, 2018).

McGregor, Katharine, 'Mass Violence in the Indonesian Transition from Sukarno to Suharto', *Global Dialogue*, 15, 1 (2013), pp. 133–144.

Nadia, Ita F., Asvi Warman Adam, Agung Putri, Ahmad Suaedi, Elfansuri, and M.M. Billah, 'Laporan Akhir Tim Pengkajian Pelanggaran HAM Berat Soeharto (Sub-Tim Pengkajian Kasus 1965)', in Baskara T. Wardaya (ed.), *Luka Bangsa Luka Kita: Pelanggaran HAM Masa Lalu dan Tawaran Rekonsiliasi* (Yogyakarta: Galang Pustaka, 2014), pp. 273–348.

Noersmono, Mars, *Bertahan Hidup di Pulau Buru* (Bandung: Ultimus, 2017).

Pohlman, Annie, 'Child-raising, Childbirth and Abortion *In Extremis*: Women's Stories of Caring for and Losing Children during the Violence of 1965–1966 in Indonesia', *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs*, 3 (2013), pp. 93–114.

Robinson, Geoffrey, *The Killing Season: A History of the Indonesian Massacres, 1965–1966* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018).

Setiawan, Hersri, *Kamus Gestok* (Yogyakarta: Galang Press, 2003).

Setiawan, Hersri, *Diburu di Pulau Buru* (Yogyakarta: Galang Press, 2006).

Setiawan, Hersri, *Memoar Pulau Buru* (Jakarta: Gramedia, 2016).

Setiawan, Ken, 'Remembering Suffering and Survival: Sites of Memory on Buru', in Katharine McGregor, Jess Melvin and Annie Pohlman (eds), *The Indonesian Genocide of 1965. Causes, Dynamics and Legacies* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), pp. 215–234.

Toer, Pramoedya Ananta, *Nyanyi Sunyi Seorang Bisu. Catatan-catatan dari Pulau Buru* (Jakarta: Lentera, 1995).

CHAPTER 6

Displacement and Detention on Ataúro Island During the Indonesian Occupation of East Timor

Hannah Loney

Abstract

The small island of Ataúro, located approximately twenty-five kilometres off the north coast of East Timor, has a long history of being used as a prison island. The Portuguese colonial administration did so over a long period, as did the Japanese occupying forces during the Second World War. The Government of Indonesia, which occupied East Timor from 1975 to 1999, implemented a similar policy. From 1980 until 1984, Ataúro was used as a holding centre for an estimated 4,000 people from across the territory – most of whom were women, children, and the elderly – as part of a military administrative strategy of isolating, detaining, and surveilling individuals and families who were considered a possible support base for the East Timorese resistance. This chapter examines life on Ataúro Island for those detainees. Conditions on the island changed across the course of the period, but daily life was generally marked by a harsh regime of deprivation, isolation, and disease. Following their release, former detainees continued to be subjected to various systems of surveillance, sporadic interrogation and detention, and restrictive policies on movement. This chapter argues that the use of Ataúro as a "prison island" is emblematic of the occupying regime's systematic attempts to displace local populations, to cut off ties between civilians and the resistance and, in so doing, to deeply disrupt the social fabric of East Timorese societies.

Keywords

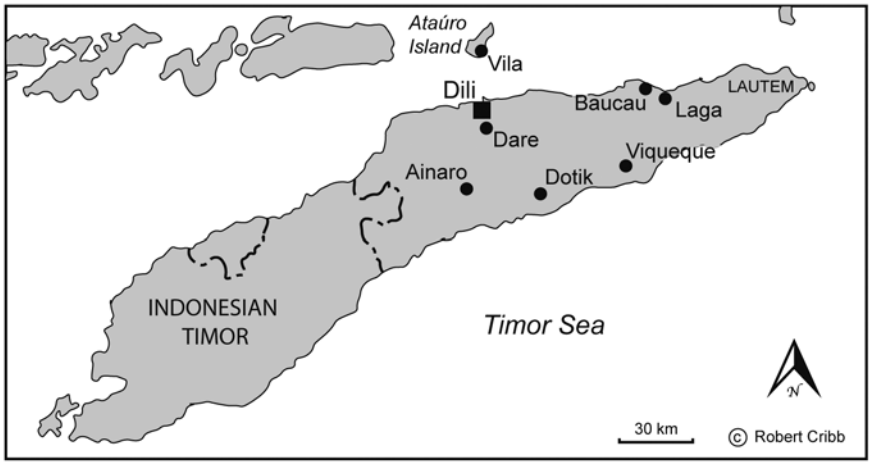
East Timor – Ataúro Island – displacement – detention – Indonesian occupation of East Timor – prison island – detention camps

The small island of Ataúro is located approximately twenty-five kilometres off the north coast of East Timor. From 1980 to 1984 the Government of Indonesia, which occupied East Timor from 1975 to 1999, used Ataúro as a holding centre for an estimated 4,000 people. Most of the detainees were women, children and the elderly. Conditions for those interned on the island changed across

©

the period, but in general, daily life was marked by a harsh regime of deprivation, isolation and neglect. Following their eventual release from the island, former detainees continued to be subjected to various systems of surveillance, sporadic interrogation and detention, as well as policies that restricted their movement. In this chapter, I examine transfers to and detention on Ataúro Island during the Indonesian occupation of East Timor, experiences of daily life for detainees on the island, and the ways in which former detainees have remembered this experience subsequently.

The chapter draws upon a range of written sources, including material from international activist and human rights organizations, government and military documents, and the findings of the Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation in East Timor (Comissão de Acolhimento, Verdade e Reconciliação de Timor Leste, CAVR), which was established to investigate and report on human rights violations committed in the territory from 1974 to 1999.[1] This written material is supplemented by two oral history interviews I conducted in 2012 and 2013 as part of a broader project on women's experiences of the Indonesian occupation. The use of Ataúro as a 'prison island' was part of an Indonesian military-administrative strategy of isolating, detaining and monitoring individuals and families who were considered a possible support base for the East Timorese resistance.[2] This strategy successfully cut ties, at least temporarily,



MAP 6.1 East Timor (Timor-Leste)

1 Commission for Reception, Truth, and Reconciliation in Timor-Leste (CAVR), *Chega! The Final Report of the Timor-Leste Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation, Vol. 1* (Jakarta: KPG in cooperation with STP-CAVR, 2013).

2 The term 'prison island' is used to refer to Ataúro in several activist publications, including the bulletins published by TAPOL, a non-government organization that monitors human rights issues in Indonesia. See *TAPOL Bulletin* 51 (May 1982).

between sympathetic civilians and the resistance. The case of Ataúro Island also came to be positioned by international activist and human rights organisations as evidence of the violence that was believed to characterise the occupation of East Timor more broadly.

1 The Indonesian Invasion of East Timor

In December 1975, the Armed Forces of the Republic of Indonesia (Angkatan Bersenjata Republik Indonesia, ABRI) launched a full-scale land, sea and air invasion of the former Portuguese colony of East Timor. Large numbers of East Timorese civilians fled the towns and villages on the northern coast of the territory and sought refuge in the mountainous interior. The popular nationalist movement, the Revolutionary Front for an Independent East Timor (Frente Revolucionária de Timor-Leste Independente, FRETILIN), which had been formed in the wake of Portuguese decolonisation, also retreated to the mountains.[3] The armed wing of FRETILIN, the Armed Forces for the National Liberation of East Timor (Forças Armadas de Libertação Nacional de Timor-Leste, FALINTIL), resisted the Indonesian military's advances and managed to maintain control over substantial territory until 1978. The population of the territory under FALINTIL control may have been as high as 300,000.[4] In the second half of 1977, the Indonesian military launched a series of campaigns aimed at separating the civilian population in the mountains from the armed resistance.[5] These campaigns – which involved massive aerial bombardments and the use of defoliants – resulted in a high civilian death toll, the loss of food supplies, and the almost total destruction of the resistance.[6] By the end of 1978, most of the civilian population in the mountains had been captured or had surrendered to Indonesian forces.[7] On 26 March 1979, the Indonesian military concluded its conventional operations and declared East Timor pacified.[8]

As a result of these military campaigns, the East Timorese resistance lost almost ninety per cent of its weaponry and eighty per cent of its troops.

3 Clinton Fernandes, *The Independence of East Timor: Multi-Dimensional Perspectives: Occupation, Resistance, and International Political Activism* (Portland, OR: Sussex Academic Press, 2011), pp. 11–15.

4 Indonesian Red Cross, 'List of People Returned in Whole of East Timor – Per Last December 1978', Part 6, Portuguese Timor – Visits of Australians to Portuguese Timor, A1838, 3038/10/11/2, National Archives of Australia, Canberra.

5 CAVR, *Chega!*, p. 219.

6 Ibid., pp. 219–220, 488.

7 Indonesian Red Cross, 'List of People Returned'.

8 CAVR, *Chega!*, p. 228.

And yet, even given these circumstances, it was able to regroup slowly and steadily – albeit in a different, less conventional form.[9] The remaining guerrilla fighters operated at a local level, largely in the east of the territory, and drew strongly upon close family networks and kinship ties. Through these networks, approximately 1,000 armed fighters were provided with food, shelter and intelligence. By these means, they were able to engage in limited combat and occasionally to inflict casualties on well-equipped Indonesian forces up to twenty times larger.[10] This strategic utilisation of social networks and traditional forms of organisation proved crucial to the survival of the resistance, and enabled what anthropologist John G. Taylor has described as its 'remarkable' capacity to adapt to such challenging circumstances.[11] Even simply the continued existence of an armed insurrection, however small, was critical to the symbolism of East Timorese resistance to Indonesian power. From the perspective of the Indonesian authorities, even this amount of resistance was substantial enough to warrant the deployment of extensive military resources and continued intelligence operations. It also provided the impetus for tight controls on population movement and distribution that remained an enduring feature of social life throughout the occupation.

2 Forced Displacement and Detention

In the early 1980s, the East Timorese resistance launched a series of popular uprisings (*levantamentos*) against Indonesian forces, including attacks on several military posts on the outskirts of the capital, Dili.[12] The attacks took the Indonesian military by surprise: as a U.S. Embassy communique noted, they caused 'distress and embarrassment' for Indonesian officials.[13] In response, the Indonesian administration commenced Operation Security (*Operasi Keamanan*), which aimed to destroy the last remnants of the resistance. The operation was best known for the 'fence of legs' campaign (*pagar betis*), in which a line of East Timorese civilians – mostly men aged between 12 and 35 – were forced

9 John G. Taylor, *Indonesia's Forgotten War: the Hidden History of East Timor* (London: Zed Books, 1991), p. 116.

10 Geoffrey Robinson, *East Timor 1999: Crimes Against Humanity. A Report Commissioned by the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights* (Jakarta: Elsam and Hak, 2006), p. 11.

11 Taylor, *Indonesia's Forgotten War*, pp. 115–116.

12 CAVR, *Chega!*, p. 234.

13 Telegram 10200 from U.S. Embassy Jakarta to State Department, 'Impressions After June 10 Attack in East Timor', 25 June 1980, The National Security Archive, https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB174/.

to march across the territory, with military personnel behind them, to search for and capture any remaining guerrilla fighters.[14] The operation also included a major program of detention, including of families of known resistance fighters and individuals suspected of having connections with the resistance. Detainees were interned in a number of locations across the territory, including Ataúro Island, Dotik, Ainaro Town and Dare. This pattern – attacks by the East Timorese resistance followed by Indonesian military reprisals including the indiscriminate shooting of civilians, burning of villages, large-scale transfers of population and detentions – continued throughout the early 1980s.[15]

Ataúro Island was distinct among the sites of long-term detention due to the sheer number of people transferred to the island, the isolation and neglect that detainees experienced, and the long duration of their stay. According to Amnesty International, the detainee population on Ataúro grew from approximately 500 in mid-1980 to 4,000 in 1982, before declining to 1,500 in 1984.[16] People were usually arrested by local military units and detained in their home villages, before being transferred to the island. Most were sent by boat from the northern port towns of Dili and Laga, although some were sent by helicopter; few were told where they were headed or for how long they would be detained. Eye-witness accounts collected by an East Timorese civilian based in Dili and published in the Melbourne-based *Timor Information Service* – one of the first English-language newsletters providing information to the Australian and international activist movement – described the process of shipment to Ataúro. In September 1981, the witness observed hundreds of people at the port in Dili, 'lined up ready to be shipped away'. 'A wire fence separated them from by-passers. They were not permitted to speak with anyone'.[17]

Upon their arrival on Ataúro, detainees were lined up in groups based on village affiliation, counted and registered. Indonesian authorities then appointed an individual from within each group to represent the detainees, who was responsible for the behaviour of the group. Although they were not held in a prison building, detainees were not permitted to leave the island during their internment. The first group of detainees was reportedly housed in a primary

14 Carmel Budiardjo and Liem Soei Liong, *The War Against East Timor* (London: Zed Books, 1984), pp. 193–210.

15 Fernandes, *The Independence of East Timor*, p. 66.

16 Amnesty International, *East Timor: Violations of Human Rights: Extrajudicial Executions, 'Disappearances', Torture, and Political Imprisonment, 1975–1984*, ASA 21/16/85 (London: Amnesty International Publications, 1985), pp. 66–67.

17 Document held by Timor Information Service. Source known, name not for publication. Cited in 'Ataúro: Anatomy of a Prison Island', *Timor Information Service* 35 (March/April 1982), pp. 3–4.

school building in the main town of Vila. Subsequently, makeshift shelters were built by either the Indonesian authorities or the detainees themselves. The homes had corrugated metal roofs and walls made of black plastic or tarpaulin. Movement was restricted and a curfew was put in place.[18] Family members were not allowed to visit detainees, and many detainees had no way of informing their families of their whereabouts. Although most detainees were not interrogated on the island, Indonesian security forces did conduct a small number of interrogations.[19] There was little corporal punishment aside from the experience of transfer and internment itself; however, as I explain later, the deprivation and neglect to which detainees were subjected produced a significant degree of physical and emotional suffering.

In official English-language publications pertaining to the annexation of East Timor, the Indonesian government claimed – perhaps in an attempt to justify its policies in response to actual or anticipated foreign criticism – that the transfers were enacted to 'protect' civilians and to 'safeguard' them from the resistance. An Indonesian Department of Information document from 1984, for example, described the transfers as 'temporary measures which the Government deemed necessary to protect civilians from eventual [sic] harassment' by the resistance forces, 'some of whom were still hiding in the mountainous areas'. On the island, the document claimed, health, education and recreation facilities were 'adequately supplied'; the people 'lived normally and most probably for some of them they had a better life'.[20] Officially, at least, the transfers were implemented as a benevolent measure, intended to facilitate a smoother integration of the territory into the Republic more broadly.

Internal Indonesian military training manuals were, perhaps necessarily, more explicit about the strategic and political aims of the transfers. A set of military manuals from 1982 explained that they were intended to 'cut the ties' between support networks and resistance groups.[21] The process for dealing with dissident elements utilised the territorial military command structure and its East Timorese civilian defence elements that had been established by

18 CAVR, *Chega!*, pp. 1534–1537.

19 Ibid., p. 1536.

20 Republic of Indonesia, Department of Information, *East Timor Today* (Jakarta: Department of Information, 1984), p. 34.

21 Military Resort Command (Korem) 164, Wira Dharma, Intelligence Section, 'Instruction Manual: the Way for Babinsa or Team Pembina Desa to Expose/Break Up GPK Support Networks', 30 August 1982, translated and reproduced in *TAPOL Bulletin* 58 (July 1983), p. 3.

the Indonesian military upon its annexation of the territory.[22] The instruction manual, 'How to Cope with "Troublesome" Villages', for example, provided directives to Sub-Regional Military Command (Komando Resor Militer, Korem) 164 on how to use Non-Commissioned Village Guidance Officers (Bintara Pembina Desa, Babinsa) and Village Guidance Teams (Tim Pembina Desa). Once support networks for the resistance – described as GPK (Gerakan Pengacau Keamanan, Security Disturbance Movement) – had been exposed, military personnel were instructed to facilitate 'transfer [of the resistance supporters] to Atauro or to other places designated for this purpose'.[23] Another manual, 'System of Security in Towns and Settlement Areas', gave a general directive: 'Physically separate GPK support by [...] moving to another place people with relatives who are GPKs still active in the bush, particularly those classified as leaders'. The manual on 'Ways of Breaking Up the Networks of GPK Support' specified that those 'separated' were to be sent, among other places, to Ataúro Island: 'Evacuate to Ataúro and other designated places the network of GPK support in the settlements [areas under Indonesian control] as well as families of GPKs not yet evacuated'.[24]

Testimony gathered from East Timorese refugees by international human rights and activist organisations similarly observed that the primary reason for transfer and internment was the connections that detainees had with the resistance movement. A collection of material gathered in March 1982 by the Amsterdam-based Movement for Democracy and Human Rights, for example, included a document in which East Timorese refugees in Portugal described the transfers. One woman said she had been transferred to the island with her five children because she had a brother-in-law who belonged to the 'anti-Indonesian resistance'; a young boy was transferred to the island because he had a brother who was 'fighting against the Indonesians in the mountains'.[25] By early 1981, the Lisbon-based *Timor Newsletter* reported that the island was 'crowded' with deportees who had been imprisoned 'for purely political reasons, because they opposed the means used by the Indonesian authorities to impose the integration of Timor'.[26] The policy of rounding up, transferring

22 For a discussion of the Indonesian military apparatus in East Timor, see Douglas Kammen, 'Notes on the Transformation of the East Timor Military Command and its Implications for Indonesia', *Indonesia* 67 (April 1999), pp. 61–76.

23 Ibid.

24 Cited in Amnesty International, *East Timor*, p. 65.

25 'Document 8: Situation of Those Exiled on the Island of Atauro', in *Dossier on East Timor, March 1982*. In Timor Archive, Clearing House for Archival Records on Timor (CHART), https://timorarchives.files.wordpress.com/2012/06/jakarta-dossier-march1982_p.pdf.

26 'Ataúro Transformed to a Prison Isle', *Timor Newsletter* 1, 4–5 (March/April 1981), p. 6.

and interning suspect individuals and families was thus a central part of the occupying regime's attempt to eliminate any expression of dissent.

3 Conditions on Ataúro Island

Reports of living conditions for detainees on Ataúro Island were also collected by activist organisations. Eye-witness accounts claimed that conditions were extremely poor. The Indonesian authorities were said to have provided detainees with inadequate food, medicine, sanitary facilities and shelter; malnourishment and disease were the result. An anonymous letter from East Timor dated November 1981 and reproduced in several activist publications, for example, provided a detailed account of conditions on Ataúro Island.[27] According to the letter, there was 'a general atmosphere of sadness, hunger, distrust' on the island. Approximately two-thirds of the detainees were women and children, the majority of whom had come from the far eastern district of Lautém, as well as the resistance strongholds of Baucau and Viqueque. Many of the women were between the ages of 60 and 70 and were described as 'invalids' and widows. The letter described these women as completely isolated. 'These women live alone, sitting in a corner of the tents, keeping company with others in the same condition. They starve, having been abandoned by all'.[28] The reference to the women living alone was not a literal statement. Rather, it can be seen as an observation that they were completely disconnected from their family and kinship networks. Normal social relations were not built exclusively around individuals, but within the East Timorese context, relied upon community in order to make them meaningful. Most detainees were said to live in tents with 'no element of hygiene and cleanliness'; they were hungry, lacked adequate clothing, and suffered from various diseases.[29]

Accounts from refugees who had escaped to Portugal, as well as letters smuggled out of East Timor by Catholic priests, were published in activist newsletters and by human rights organisations, and testified to the appalling conditions experienced by detainees. As international human rights and activist organisations became aware of these conditions, they began to position Ataúro

27 Cited in 'Ataúro: Anatomy of a Prison Island', *TAPOL Bulletin* 51 (May 1982), pp. 1, 3; and 'Ataúro: Anatomy of a Prison Island', *Timor Information Service* 35 (March/April 1982), pp. 2–5.

28 Hannah Loney, *In Women's Words: Violence and Everyday Life during the Indonesian Occupation of East Timor, 1975–1999* (Portland, OR: Sussex Academic Press, 2018).

29 'A Letter from East Timor', November 1982, *Timor Information Service* 35, March/April 1982, p. 2.

Island as a microcosm of the repression, violence and neglect that was seen to characterise the occupation more broadly. Amnesty International, for example, described the 'hardship' and 'deplorable conditions' that detainees experienced on the island.[30] The *Timor Information Service* argued that the transfers to Ataúro represented a most 'extreme form' of population resettlement.[31] These organisations stressed that the transfers not only involved the dislocation of individuals, but also the disruption of networks of sociality that were crucial to East Timorese social and cultural life. Rather than attending to the wellbeing of the displaced populations, they believed, the Indonesian administration remained focused upon its preeminent concern: identifying and eliminating every expression of resistance to its integration of East Timor into Indonesia.

Conditions for detainees on the island, however, gradually improved with the increase in international attention to both the Indonesian occupation more broadly, and the internments on Ataúro Island specifically. Immediately after its December 1975 invasion of East Timor, the Indonesian government had severely restricted access to the territory by outside observers. As scholars such as Clinton Fernandes have shown, the government's ability to minimise international awareness of the situation in East Timor was essential to the maintenance of its authority there.[32] A small number of foreign visitors was permitted access to the territory in the early 1980s, though they were always closely supervised by the Indonesian authorities. These visits were precipitated, in part, by reports in the Australian media from March 1982 of famine in East Timor.[33] The claims stemmed from a January 1982 media release from Australian Catholic Relief (ACR), an aid and development agency.[34] The ACR media release, in turn, was based on a November 1981 exchange of correspondence between the Apostolic Administrator of East Timor, Monsignor Martinho da Costa Lopes, and Bishop John Gerry, then ACR Chairman.[35] These visits and

30 Amnesty International, *East Timor*, p. 66.

31 *Timor Information Service* 35, March/April 1982, pp. 2–4.

32 Fernandes, *The Independence of East Timor*, pp. 63–64.

33 See, for example: 'Famine Looms in Timor', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 11 January 1982, p. 1; 'Backing for Timor Plea', *Northern Territory News*, 11 January 1982, p. 1; and 'Timor Trench', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 12 January 1982,p. 6.

34 Australian Catholic Relief, 'Press Release: Serious Situation in East Timor', 6 January 1982. In CHART, https://timorarchives.files.wordpress.com/2012/02/tis_box13-02_09.pdf.

35 Martinho da Costa Lopes, Apostolic Administrator, letter to Mgr. J.J. Gerry D.D., Secretary, Australian Episcopal Conference, Jacarta, 19 November 1981, and Bishop J.J. Gerry D.D., Secretary, Australian Episcopal Conference, letter to Mgr. da Costa Lopes, 11 November 1981. Both documents are in CHART, https://timorarchives.files.wordpress.com/2012/02/tis_box13-02_10b.pdf.

the resultant reports ended the Indonesian military's monopoly of information on conditions inside the territory.

In response to the claims of famine, Indonesian authorities permitted a small Australian delegation to assess conditions in the territory. In March 1982 the former Australian Prime Minister, Gough Whitlam, and a former editor of the *Sydney Morning Herald*, Peter Hastings, travelled to East Timor to make an 'independent assessment' of how the former colony was being governed. This trip included a visit, at the invitation of the Indonesian government, to Ataúro Island.[36] The visit was organised by the Jakarta-based Centre for Strategic and International Studies – which had long argued for Indonesia's integration of East Timor – and was conducted in the company of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) representative in Jakarta, Cedrick Neukomm. Following their visit, both Whitlam and Hastings published and broadcast their findings.[37] They also held a joint media conference in Jakarta on 5 March 1982, during which Whitlam largely rejected Mgr Lopes' claims of famine in the territory. Hastings, on the other hand, confirmed that there was 'a certain core of truth' to Mgr Lopes' report that 'hundreds had died' on Ataúro Island, stating that these deaths had resulted from a form of gastroenteritis that was caused by malnutrition.[38]

Whitlam's and Hastings' arrival in East Timor in 1982 also coincided with the arrival in Jakarta of the East Timor Sub-Committee of the Australian Council for Overseas Aid – the peak representative body for Australian non-government aid and development agencies – which was assisting an Australian Senate Inquiry into conditions in occupied East Timor. The Inquiry had been established in 1981 following a concerted public campaign by non-government organisations and activist groups. The main output of the Australian Council for Overseas Aid mission was a compilation of materials entitled *Dossier on East Timor, March 1982*, which was submitted to the Senate and circulated internationally.[39] One document in the dossier contained excerpts from a 1981

36 'Open Door Needed', *Canberra Times*, 13 March 1982, p. 2. See also Ian Davis, 'Aid Body Attacks Whitlam's Timor Visit', *Age*, 4 March 1982, p. 3; Wio Joustra, 'Embassy Glosses Timor Visit', *Australian*, 4 March 1982, p. 2.

37 See, for example: Peter Hastings, 'Indon Officials Warm to the Whitlam Style', *Age*, 8 March 1982, p. 7; Peter Hastings, 'Timor Toll May Never Be Known', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 9 March 1982, p. 13; 'E.G. Whitlam: Interviewed by Richard Andrews (Radio Australia) and Broadcast on ABC Radio "Frontline", Friday 26th March 1982', p. 9. In CHART, https://timorarchives.files.wordpress.com/2012/02/eto_w-h_09.pdf.

38 'Transcript of a Press Conference by the Honourable E.G. Whitlam, AC, QC, on Friday 5 March 1982, at the CSIS Building, Jakarta, Indonesia', ASIS Backgrounder. In CHART, https://timorarchives.files.wordpress.com/2012/02/eto_w-h_12.pdf.

39 *Dossier on East Timor*. In CHART, https://timorarchives.files.wordpress.com/2012/06/jakarta-dossier-march1982_p.pdf.

diary of an East Timorese civilian in Baucau. On 2 July, the writer had observed a truck coming from Viqueque 'full of poor and oppressed people who were destined for exile on the island of Atauro'. Several days later, on 7 July, the diary observed 'another convoy of trucks' heading in the direction of Laga. It was there, the writer noted, that the people in the trucks were 'put in boats like animals to be exiled'. On 13 July, the writer observed the prisoners still waiting in Laga for the boat to transfer them to the island:

> I saw a sea of people under trees and old houses, accompanied by Hansips [*Pertahanan Sipil*, East Timorese Civilian Defence Auxiliaries or Guards] and Indonesians, waiting to be exiled. But as the boat did not come soon, the people would wait there, waiting for the boats in Laga. Many of them caught diseases, famine [sic]; they suffered deprivations etc. because they could only receive corn already rotten and full of insects [... and] the majority of them besides catching other diseases also caught diarrhoea.[40]

The diary was one of a number of accounts that testified to the herding of individuals for mass transfers to Ataúro Island, as well as the range of deprivations that detainees experienced from the moment of their capture. The fact that the detainees waited for some time before being transferred to the island also suggests that the efficiency of these processes left much to be desired: orders from the top echelons of the Indonesian military administration may have been poorly communicated, or perhaps simply poorly executed by security forces on the ground. The circumstances of the transfers also demonstrate the Indonesian military's callous disregard and contempt for the East Timorese people.

In 1982, in response to such claims of maltreatment, Indonesian authorities permitted a delegation from the ICRC to assess the situation in East Timor. The delegation was allowed to visit places of detention, including what was described as the 'displaced persons camp' on Ataúro Island. A team of four delegates, including a doctor, visited the island in late February and observed 3,332 'displaced persons' there.[41] The Indonesian administration reportedly prepared for these visits: according to an East Timorese official based in Jakarta, conditions on the island were 'cleaned-up and prepared' before the delegation's arrival.[42] A team of four delegates from the ICRC made a second

40 Document 5, 'Baucau: Excerpts from a Diary', in Ibid.

41 International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), *Annual Report 1982* (Geneva: International Committee of the Red Cross, 1983),p. 45.

42 Cited in 'Ataúro: Anatomy of a Prison Island', *Timor Information Service* 35 (March/April 1982), p. 2.

visit to the territory from 30 October to 10 November 1982, again visiting Ataúro Island. This time the delegation observed 3,794 'displaced persons'.[43] These visits resulted in a significant improvement in conditions for detainees. The ICRC also began recording detainees' names and home villages, and then informing their families of their whereabouts. Following the February visit, and in conjunction with the Indonesian Red Cross, the ICRC also announced that it would establish an emergency food and medical assistance programme 'to deal with the state of malnutrition of the population, particularly the children'. Monthly food parcels were delivered, an intensive feeding centre was opened, and medication was distributed. The ICRC reported that its delegates had access to the island throughout 1982 and were able to 'monitor the smooth running of the programme'.[44]

Despite the improvement in physical conditions on the island, most firsthand accounts continued to emphasise the long-term effects of isolation from families and communities, and of ongoing neglect by the Indonesian authorities. A 1984 open letter sent to the Prime Minister of Norway by Maria Silva, an East Timorese refugee in Australia, for example, provided an emotive description of the particular difficulties experienced by mothers:

> Nursing mothers lose their breast milk, which dries up suddenly as a result of shock and trauma. Their babies were screaming of hunger! Inevitably, diseases such as diarrhoea and dysentery broke out and the babies died like flies. I helped to bury the innocent babies who passed away ahead of time [sic]. At the peak of the crisis, we had buried 5 babies in one week! At the time I almost lost faith in humanity.[45]

This letter suggests that despite the provision of additional supplies, detainees continued to suffer severe deprivation.

By 1984, transfers to Ataúro Island had ceased and most detainees had been released. The armed resistance had largely been defeated, and the official position of the Indonesian government in 1984 was that 'peace and order returned in East Timor and the situation became increasingly stable'.[46] Activists inside East Timor and internationally believed that the decision to end the transfer policy had been implemented by the Government of Indonesia 'quite hurridly [sic] and against her will'. According to a 1985 internal East Timorese

43 ICRC, *Annual Report 1982*, p. 46.

44 Ibid.

45 'Open Letter Sent by an East Timorese Woman Exiled in Australia to the Prime Minister of Norway, Mrs Gro Harlem Brundtland, on the Eve of her State Visit to Indonesia, from Maria Silva, Australia'. In Catherine Scott's Personal Archival Collection, London.

46 Republic of Indonesia, Department of Information, *East Timor Today*, p. 34.

document, foreign criticism of conditions on Ataúro and the 'appealing demands of justice and humane solidarity' had produced an 'international political crisis' for Indonesia.[47] The protests from international organisations, according to human rights activist George Aditjondro, had forced Indonesia to 'close down the Atauro prison island'.[48] Despite the fact that most detainees had been returned to the mainland, the experience of internment on Ataúro Island continued to have a significant impact upon their lives. Many were not returned to their home villages, but instead, were sent to strategically-located 'resettlement villages' (*daerah pemukiman baru*). The occupying forces continued to suspect them of sympathy with the resistance and closely monitored their actions.[49]

4 Memories of Life on Ataúro Island

Memories of life on Ataúro are prominent within East Timorese women's narratives of the Indonesian occupation, as revealed by oral history interviews I conducted in 2012 and 2013. One interviewee, Durvalina Belo Magno, was transferred to the island in 1980 and interned there until 1984. Her narrative conveys the daily struggles that detainees experienced, and also sheds light upon how conditions changed across the four-year period.[50] Another interviewee, Maria do Céu Lopes da Silva Federer, was not a detainee but had been born on the island and had observed the arrival of prisoners in the early 1980s.[51]

Durvalina, who was born in Ainaro in 1965, described her incarceration on Ataúro Island as one of the key events of her life; she became quite upset when talking about this difficult experience. After his involvement in the 10–11 June 1980 uprising in Dili, Durvalina's husband had been imprisoned on the mainland and Durvalina had been transferred to Ataúro Island. Durvalina recalled the shock of arriving on the island: she found the arid, dry land to

47 'East-Timor Current Fighting Situation', 1985. In 'Status of the Struggle in Timor-Leste', TAPOL Collection, Arquivo & Museu da Resistência Timorense (AMRT), http://amrtimor.org/docs/visualizador.php?bd=Documentos&nome_da_pasta=06443.038&numero_da_pagina=1.

48 George Aditjondro, 'Ninjas, Nanggalas, Monuments, and Massad Manuals: an Anthropology of Indonesian State Terror in East Timor', in Jeffrey A. Sluka (ed.), *Death Squad: the Anthropology of State Terror* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000), p. 163.

49 Amnesty International, *East Timor*, p. 68.

50 Durvalina Belo Magno, interview with the author, Dili, 29 June 2012.

51 Maria do Céu Lopes da Silva Federer, interview with the author, Dili, 20 July 2013.

be 'completely different' from anywhere else that she had been. One of Durvalina's most painful memories of life on the island was the lack of food. There was little fresh food or water, she recalled; the only food provided to detainees by the military was corn that was 'almost rotten'. Because they had no other option, Durvalina explained, they had eaten it, but she still recalled many people becoming extremely ill and dying from starvation. Eventually, the local people had shown them how to eat the highly nutritious leaves of the *marungi* (moringa) tree. Especially in the early days, Durvalina recalled, they really 'suffered a lot'.[52]

Durvalina's narrative also sheds light upon the social status of former detainees and the enduring effects of the experience of detention upon their lives. Even after she was released in 1984, she explained, she continued to have trouble moving around freely and obtaining employment. Her husband had also struggled to find a job upon his release from prison, and the family had still felt that they were continually being watched (*haree tuir-tuir* or *tau matan*). 'We really didn't feel that we were free; it was like we were still in jail', she recalled. The stigma of being an ex-detainee continued to shape the trajectory of Durvalina's life.[53]

Another of my interviewees, Céu, was born on Ataúro Island in 1957. In 1982, after the prisoners arrived, she had begun to work as an interpreter for a Swiss doctor from the ICRC. She recalled meeting people from different parts of East Timor, and their unfamiliarity to her: 'the people were from Manatuto to Los Palos', Céu recalled, 'and besides the tragedy that had brought them there, for me, it was like, who are you? Which language do you speak?'. She recalled the shock that the detainees experienced upon arrival: the sense of expectation, and then the lack of facilities and shortage of food. The detainees were utterly neglected: 'So suddenly these people arrived, and …', Céu remembered, 'nothing happened'. She continued:

> So there was the trauma of getting people from their homes, and not really telling them what was going to happen. Because most of the prisoners were told that they should just pack food for one or two days, just one set of clothing, because they were going to be taken for interrogation and then in a few days, they would come back. So people left their entire houses, animals, farms, to be shipped to Ataúro just like that. So you can imagine, some mothers arrived and out of shock, their [breast] milk

52 Durvalina Belo Magno, interview with the author, Dili, 29 June 2012.

53 Ibid.

> dried. And there were no provisions, they didn't expect to go to Ataúro, so there was no powdered milk, nothing.[54]

Céu describes what was, essentially, an under-planned and poorly executed strategy of forced displacement and detention. It is unclear whether the prisoners were deliberately not informed as to the particular site and duration of their internment, or whether the Indonesian security forces who carried these orders were simply unaware of the details of the plan.

Céu also recalled the extremely crowded and unsanitary living conditions of the prisoners, who had no access to clean water or sufficient food. 'There was no shelter for a bathroom, people went to the toilet here and there, nearby', she remembered. As a result, detainees were particularly vulnerable to infectious diseases, and many people contracted diarrhoea and various skin diseases. Céu provided a particularly vivid and shocking image of the intensity of this suffering: she remembered seeing small children 'screaming and crying', while the parents 'just sat there and did nothing because there was nothing to do'. She recalled, in particular, an outbreak of cholera and the resulting deaths of many children:

> I remember one day, we had to bury five children, one after the other. And the doctor told [spoke to] me, because a mother was wailing and hugging her baby because it was already dead. And … the doctor said, 'You have to take it away. You have to take it away, because otherwise the disease will spread really fast'. And I had to pull that baby from the mother's arms, and I have to live with that for the rest of my life. I had to do the right thing, but it cost me. I knew it was cruel, but [I did it] to save other kids.[55]

5 Conclusion

The Indonesian authorities' implementation of a program of mass transfer and internment of civilians, as well as the decision to end the program, were deeply tied to the specific course of the conflict between the Indonesian military and the East Timorese resistance. Initiated in response to the perceived threat from local resistance forces and in an attempt to crush their support networks, the policy, in one sense, fulfilled its purpose. At the same time, however, conditions on Ataúro Island attracted a significant degree of foreign criticism. The

54 Maria do Céu Lopes da Silva Federer, interview with the author, Dili, 20 July 2013.
55 Ibid.

Indonesian authorities' reaction to such criticism appears to have modified official attitudes to the transfer and detention program. Thus, while the transfers did temporarily cut off ties between the armed resistance and its support networks, the failure on the part of Indonesian authorities effectively to contain information regarding conditions on Ataúro Island enabled international human rights organisations and activist networks to highlight this case as an exemplar of the repression, brutality and violence that they believed characterised the Indonesian occupation more broadly. Feelings of isolation and neglect dominated East Timorese people's memories of internment on the island, as did the disregard which the invading forces displayed towards them.

Acknowledgements

The fieldwork upon which this chapter builds was supported by several grants from the University of Melbourne: the School of Historical and Philosophical Studies Research and Graduate Studies Funding Scheme; the Faculty of Arts PhD Fieldwork Grant; the Graduate Research in Arts Travel Scheme; the MA Bartlett Special Travel Grant-in-Aid; the Riady Scholarship; the Prue Torney Memorial Prize; and the Alma Hansen Scholarship. Thank you to Sandra Wilson, Christina Twomey and Robert Cribb for inviting me to participate in their panel at the Asian Studies Association of Australia conference, as well as for their helpful comments on this chapter. Thank you also to the Women in Asia Organizing Committee for providing me with a travel bursary to attend the conference. Some material from this chapter was first published in my book, *In Women's Words: Violence and Everyday Life during the Indonesian Occupation of East Timor, 1975–1999* (Portland, OR: Sussex Academic Press, 2018).

References

Aditjondro, George, 'Ninjas, Nanggalas, Monuments, and Massad Manuals: an Anthropology of Indonesian State Terror in East Timor', in Jeffrey A. Sluka (ed.), *Death Squad: the Anthropology of State Terror* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000), pp. 158–188.

Amnesty International, *East Timor: Violations of Human Rights: Extrajudicial Executions, 'Disappearances', Torture, and Political Imprisonment, 1975–1984* (London: Amnesty International Publications, 1985).

Budiardjo, Carmel and Liem Soei Liong, *The War Against East Timor* (London: Zed Books, 1984).

Commission for Reception, Truth, and Reconciliation in Timor-Leste (CAVR), *Chega! The Final Report of the Timor-Leste Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation, Vol. 1* (Jakarta: KPG in cooperation with STP-CAVR, 2013).

Fernandes, Clinton, *The Independence of East Timor: Multi-Dimensional Perspectives: Occupation, Resistance, and International Political Activism* (Portland, OR: Sussex Academic Press, 2011).

Indonesia, Republic of, Department of Information, *East Timor Today* (Jakarta: Department of Information, 1984).

International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), *Annual Report 1982* (Geneva: International Committee of the Red Cross, 1983).

Kammen, Douglas, 'Notes on the Transformation of the East Timor Military Command and its Implications for Indonesia', *Indonesia* 67 (April 1999), pp. 61–76.

Loney, Hannah, *In Women's Words: Violence and Everyday Life during the Indonesian Occupation of East Timor, 1975–1999* (Portland, OR: Sussex Academic Press, 2018).

Robinson, Geoffrey, *East Timor 1999: Crimes Against Humanity. A Report Commissioned by the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights* (Jakarta: Elsam and Hak, 2006).

Taylor, John G., *Indonesia's Forgotten War: the Hidden History of East Timor* (London: Zed Books, 1991).

PART 3

Torture and Re-Education

∴

CHAPTER 7

Detention Camps and the Order to Annihilate During the 1965–1966 Indonesian Genocide

Jess Melvin

Abstract

This chapter uses eyewitness testimony and internal military documents to investigate the operation of detention camps during the 1965–1966 Indonesian genocide. It argues that different types of detention camps were used by the military during this period. These different types of camps were established at different times and used for different functions. The chapter focuses on 'detain/kill' sites that were utilised during the systematic mass killing phase of the military's campaign. The purpose of this type of detention camp was to process detainees for death. By comparing the rare eyewitness account of a survivor of a 'detain/kill' detention camp in Takengon, Central Aceh, with the military's own records, I point to the military's coordinating role behind what was a systematic campaign to annihilate Indonesia's communist group.

Keywords

Indonesia – mass killing – Indonesian army – Aceh – Indonesian Communist Party – genocide – political prisoners – detention camps

Detention camps played a pivotal role during the 1965–1966 Indonesian genocide. Alongside the mass killings of members and associates of the Indonesian Communist Party (Partai Komunis Indonesia, PKI), the long-term detention of hundreds of thousands of leftists played a major role in eliminating the progressive movement from Indonesia's political life. These detention camps have been commonly seen as a parallel and less severe part of the suppression campaign. This chapter, however, shows that the concentration of leftists in detention camps played an integral role in the military's annihilation campaign.

Official stories of the detention camps maintain that they were a protective measure. Military propaganda accounts disingenuously propose that the Indonesian people responded angrily and spontaneously to an attempted coup

©

by the Communist Party, killing communist neighbours who, they believed, were about to launch a massacre of their own.[1] 'Kill or be killed' was the justification offered for the slaughter. Most killings were said to have occurred in the streets and the villages. The military then stepped in to stop the violence and 'restore order'. To achieve this goal, it admitted to establishing detention camps on a large scale. This action was said to be both humanitarian – to protect relatively innocent people from community wrath – and procedural: to allow the orderly identification of committed leftists who had escaped the killings and who might still represent a danger to Indonesian society.[2]

Since the time of the killings, scholars and human rights activists have questioned the veracity of this official propaganda account.[3] It has long been suspected that the military played a central role in initiating and implementing the killings. Several key studies have also examined the function and operation of long-term detention camps.[4] Former detainees and other eyewitnesses to the detention process have explained that detainees were often subjected to years of torture and near-starvation before experiencing ongoing state-sanctioned discrimination after release. (See also the Pohlman chapter in this volume.) These accounts have confirmed that long-term detention camps were used to consolidate the New Order military regime, which rose to power on the back of the killings.

This chapter builds upon this research to argue that a different type of detention camp was also in operation during the time of the killings. This type of

1 See, for example, *40 Hari Kegagalan 'G.30.S': 1 Oktober-10 November 1966* (Jakarta: Staf Angkatan Bersendjata, Pusat Sedjarah Angkatan Bersendjata, 1965); Nugroho Notosusanto and Ismail Saleh, *The Coup Attempt of the 'September 30 Movement' in Indonesia* (Jakarta: P.T. Pembimbing Masa-Djakarta, 1968).

2 The term 'clean environment' (*bersih lingkungan*), as a way to refer to the stated need to purge the community of communist influence, is believed to have entered into general usage in Indonesia from the mid-1970s. John Roosa, Ayu Ratih and Hilmar Farid, 'Pengantar: Sejarah Lisan dan Ingatan Sosia', in John Roosa, Ayu Ratih and Hilmar Farid (eds), *Tahun yang Tak Pernah Berakhir: Memahami Pengalaman Korban 65, esai-esai sejarah lisan* (Jakarta: Lembaga Studi dan Advokasi Masyarakat and Tim Relawan untuk Kemanusiaan Institut Sejarah Sosial Indonesia, 2004), p. 17.

3 For an overview of how this propaganda account has been questioned, see Jess Melvin, *The Army and the Indonesian Genocide: Mechanics of Mass Murder* (New York: Routledge, 2018), pp. 11–16, 31–36.

4 See, for example, Justus M. van der Kroef, 'Indonesia's Political Prisoners', *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 49, No. 4 (1976), pp. 625–647; Douglas Kammen and Faizah Zakaria, 'Detention in Mass Violence: Policy and Practice in Indonesia, 1965–1968', *Critical Asian Studies*, Vol. 44, No. 3 (2012), pp. 441–466; Asvi Warman Adam, 'Suharto's Grievous Human Rights Abuses: The Case of Buru Island', in Saskia Wieringa, Jess Melvin and Annie Pohlman (eds), *The International People's Tribunal for 1965 and the Indonesian Genocide* (New York: Routledge, 2019), pp. 80–95.

MAP 7.1 Indonesia

detention camp, I propose, has been hiding in plain sight from researchers, primarily because the majority of detainees who passed through these sites were killed. The majority of people killed during the genocide were not killed in the streets as was claimed by the military. Instead, the vast bulk of those killed were held in short-term detention camps before being transported on a systematic basis to military-controlled killing sites. These 'detain/kill' detention camps were established before the better-studied long-term detention camps and performed a distinct function, namely to process detainees for death.

The 'detain/kill' detention camps are evidence the military developed a system to facilitate the methodical destruction of a detainee population. While it is possible this process began, in the first instance, as a callous response to overcrowding, whereby the military decided that it did not have the means to keep the detainees and did not want to release them, and therefore simply chose to dispose of them,[5] this chapter argues that the military's intent went further than this: it developed and acted upon clear orders to annihilate Indonesia's communist group.

In order to illustrate how these 'detain/kill' detention camps operated at the local level, I examine the case of Takengon in Central Aceh and the story of one individual survivor of the detention camp system there, Ibrahim Kadir.[6] I will

5 This explanation can be found in some oral accounts. See, for example, interview with Dahlan Sulaiman, Banda Aceh, 29 December 2011, reported in Melvin, *The Army and the Indonesian Genocide*, p. 168.

6 I have chosen to tell Ibrahim Kadir's story because it is representative of the experience of survivors of the detention process in Aceh. Kadir starred in Garin Nugroho's award winning documentary film *Puisi Tak Terkuburkan* (2000), which is the story of Kadir's experiences during the 1965–1966 killings in Takengon, Central Aceh. Ibrahim Kadir passed away on 1 September 2020.

compare Kadir's story, as he related it to me over several days in 2009, with the information found in Indonesian military documents that I discovered in 2010, in what I call the Indonesian genocide files.[7] Kadir's experiences, combined with the military's own records of these events, provide a compelling narrative through which it is possible to see a clear pattern of military agency in the killings. This narrative provides powerful evidence of how 'detain/kill' detention camps were used as part of the military's systematic campaign to annihilate Indonesia's communist group.

1 The Indonesian Genocide

During the morning of 1 October 1965, the Indonesian military leadership, under the control of Major General Suharto, launched an undeclared coup to seize control of the Indonesian state.[8] Sumatra was placed under martial law from that morning, while Jakarta would follow suit on 3 October.[9] By midnight on 1 October, the military leadership had begun to issue orders for soldiers to participate in what was being described as an 'Annihilation Operation'.[10] From 4 October, civilians were also ordered to participate in this campaign.[11] The target was Indonesia's communist group.[12]

The official justification given for the military's attack was that the PKI had been responsible for a failed coup attempt led by a group called the 30 September Movement (G30S: *Gerakan 30 September*) during the morning

7 I came across these documents at the former Indonesian Intelligence Agency's archives in Banda Aceh during fieldwork for my PhD.

8 For a more detailed account of how this coup was implemented, see Melvin, *The Army and the Indonesian Genocide: Mechanics of Mass Murder*; Jess Melvin, 'There's now proof that Soeharto orchestrated the 1965 killings', *Indonesia at Melbourne*, 26 June 2018. Available online: http://indonesiaatmelbourne.unimelb.edu.au/theres-now-clear-proof-that-soeharto-orchestrated-the-1965-killings/ [accessed 30 August 2018].

9 Melvin, *The Army and the Indonesian Genocide*, pp. 71–74, 124–125.

10 Ibid., pp. 117–119.

11 Ibid., pp. 125–127.

12 For a discussion of how this target group was identified, see ibid., pp. 43–46. Other recent overviews of the 1965–1966 killings can be found in Douglas Kammen and Katharine McGregor, *The Contours of Mass Violence in Indonesia, 1965–86* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2012); Katharine McGregor, Jess Melvin and Annie Pohlman (eds), *The Indonesian Genocide of 1965: Causes, Dynamics and Legacies* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2018); Geoffrey Robinson, *Killing Season: A History of the Indonesian Massacres* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2018); Saskia Wieringa, Jess Melvin and Annie Pohlman (eds), *The International People's Tribunal for 1965 and the Indonesian Genocide* (New York: Routledge, forthcoming).

of 1 October. The G30S kidnapped and then murdered key members of the national military leadership, allegedly in a bungled attempt to forestall a military coup believed to be planned for 5 October.[13] The Armed Forces Commander, Ahmad Yani, was killed, leaving the military momentarily leaderless. Major General Suharto, then Commander of the Strategic Command (Kostrad), assumed Yani's former position. Although the PKI leader, D.N. Aidit, and a tiny handful of party officials, appear to have been involved in the G30S planning, there is no evidence that the Party leadership as a whole, let alone the rank and file PKI membership, had any inkling of the plot. Nonetheless, the military accused party members both of direct complicity in G30S and of plotting the murder of their anti-communist neighbours in a post-coup grab for power.[14]

Instead, there is now evidence that the military leaders, though not anticipating their own kidnap and murder, had been waiting for an event that could be used as a pretext to launch their own coup.[15] The PKI was hugely popular in Indonesia, having grown to be the largest Communist Party in the world outside the USSR and Communist China.[16] The military leadership, which was known to be anti-communist, was concerned that the communists would soon come to power with the acquiescence of Sukarno, who was a self-identified Marxist. From March 1965 it had been conducting dry run tests throughout Sumatra to test the preparedness of the military to implement martial law and mobilise the population to conduct internal security operations.[17]

The reckless actions of the G30S, which went far beyond the bounds of accepted political behaviour,[18] allowed the surviving military leadership under Suharto to implement this long-term plan. The military was able to launch a much more aggressive attack than might otherwise have been possible. From 5 October 1965, public killings and mass arrests of individuals accused of being affiliated with the PKI commenced. From 14 October, the military began

13 For an account of the 30 September Movement, see John Roosa, *Pretext for Mass Murder: The 30th September Movement and Suharto's Coup d'Etat in Indonesia* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006).

14 Ibid.

15 Ibid.

16 Donald Hindley, *The Communist Party of Indonesia, 1951–1963* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966), xii.

17 Melvin, *The Army and the Indonesian Genocide*, pp. 71–74.

18 There had been high profile political kidnappings before, but not murders. Sukarno, for example, was kidnapped in 1945 in a successful effort to have him declare Indonesian independence. Benedict Anderson, *Java in a Time of Revolution: Occupation and Resistance, 1944–1946* (Jakarta: Equinox Publishing, 2006, originally 1972), p. 74.

to implement a systematic mass killing campaign explicitly aimed at physically annihilating this target group.[19]

2 Detention Camps during the 1965 Genocide

This chapter focuses on the short-term 'detain/kill' detention camps that were established by the military at the height of the genocide. Not much has been written about the operation of these camps in comparison with the operation of long-term detention camps.[20] A reason for this comparative silence may be the relatively richer documentary record that exists in relation to the long-term detention camps. While the short term 'detain/kill' sites were established specifically to facilitate mass murder, the long-term camps were never kept secret. Indeed, they were part of the military's attempt to present a legalistic façade for its undeclared coup. The legal framework for the long-term detention camps was drawn from the military's powers under the Crush Malaysia Command (Kogam).[21]

Long-term detention camps were established throughout the archipelago, often during the later stages of the military's campaign, and were used to house political prisoners without trial, often for many years. The geographical spread of these camps, as they existed in 1976, a full decade after the worst of the killings ended, can be seen in a map produced by Tapol, a human rights group established in 1973. ('Tapol' is an acronym for '*Tahanan Politik*', political prisoner'.)[22] Detainees in these camps were often kept in appalling conditions without access to enough food. They were also routinely subjected to torture.[23]

The most infamous of the long-term detention camps was located on Buru Island, in eastern Indonesia. This camp is examined by Ken Setiawan in this

19 Melvin, *The Army and the Indonesian Genocide*, pp. 163–188,194–230.

20 This observation is also made by Kammen and Zakaria in 'Detention in Mass Violence'.

21 The Kogam Command (announced in February 1966) was a renaming of the Koti Command, which had been activated in April 1965 for the purpose of coordinating the Crush Malaysia campaign. Harold Crouch, *The Army and Politics in Indonesia* (Jakarta: Equinox Publishing, 2007, originally 1978), p. 175. For a discussion of how the military presented a legalistic façade to other aspects of its campaign, especially its later purge of the civil service, see, Melvin, *The Army and the Indonesian Genocide*, pp. 271–272.

22 This map records the existence of two long-term detention camps on the west coast of Aceh. 'Map of detention centres across Indonesia', produced by Tapol (1976). Available online: http://intersections.anu.au/issue10/pohlman.html.

23 For a discussion of why detainees may have been subjected to torture, see John Roosa, 'The Truths of Torture: Victim's Memories and State Histories in Indonesia', *Indonesia*, Issue 85, Vol. 4, 2008, pp. 31–49.

volume. Detainees who were shipped to the island were told that their imprisonment on the island was indefinite. Upon arrival they were expected to build their own accommodation before being made to work the land to provide for their ongoing needs. Their families were later invited to join them on the island, with the understanding that their relocation to the island would be permanent. The detainees lived lives of privation and constant surveillance. Although some detainees died during detention, the purpose of these long-term camps was to quarantine detainees from the rest of society rather than to exterminate them. Other detention camps functioned in effect as slave labour camps. In North Sumatra detainees were put to work on plantations to provide unpaid forced labour.[24]

Under 'Presidential Instruction No. 9' (*Keputusan Presiden No. 9/KOGAM/5/1996*), issued in May 1966, seven months into the military's annihilation campaign, political detainees were separated into three categories: A, B and C.[25] Category A detainees were those deemed to have been directly involved in the G30S. Category B detainees were members of the PKI or its affiliated organisations that were deemed not to have been directly involved in the G30S, while Category C detainees were considered to have been only minimally involved with the PKI or the G30S, but nonetheless to have been broadly of the left and therefore politically suspect.

The majority of detainees in long-term detention camps were in categories B and C.[26] There were few Category A detainees because most of them had already been killed. The only survivors from this category were high-profile members of the G30S or PKI, who were put through intensive show trials before their eventual executions or decades-long imprisonment.[27]

The majority of potential category A detainees (the military's primary target group) were killed during the first few months of the military's annihilation campaign, before the formal classification system had been established. Some of these individuals, including high-profile local leaders of the PKI and its affiliated organisations, were indeed killed in the streets during the very early stages of the military's campaign. Others were killed in death houses

24 Footage from one such camp can be seen in Joshua Oppenheimer (2014), *The Look of Silence*, Final Cut for Real.

25 Van der Kroef, 'Indonesia's Political Prisoners', p. 628.

26 Greg Fealy, *The Release of Indonesia's Political Prisoners: Domestic Versus Foreign Policy, 1975–1979* (Clayton, Vic.: Centre of Southeast Asian Studies, Monash University, 1995), p. 38.

27 For an example of such a show trial, see 'Analysis of Responsibility: Defence Speech of Sudisman, General Secretary of the Indonesian Communist Party at his Trial before the Special Military Tribunal, Jakarta, 21 July 1967' (Melbourne: Works Co-operative, 1975).

immediately after they were abducted from the streets by military-sponsored death squads. However, most were killed after being detained for days or weeks in military-controlled detention sites. After detention, they were transported in a systematic manner under the cover of darkness to killing sites. It appears that these 'detain/kill' detention camps have been largely overlooked in the literature because they have been conflated with the long-term detention camps that were in operation long after the end of the worst of the mass killings.

3 The Order to Annihilate

Until the discovery of the Indonesian genocide files it was not known whether the military had produced written orders during the time of the genocide, nor whether the military had kept systematic records of its actions.[28] Of course, accounts from survivors, perpetrators and eyewitnesses of these events strongly suggested that the military had been heavily involved in the campaign.[29] But, until the discovery of the Indonesian genocide files, which provided the first glimpse of the military's own internal documentation of the killings, researchers looking for non-testimonial accounts of the violence were largely restricted to examining the military's own propaganda images and announcements.

These propaganda accounts clearly showed that the military desired to see the PKI destroyed. A cartoon released by the military on 8 October 1965, with the title 'Annihilate them down to the roots', shows the image of a man with the words 'the people and the armed forces' written across his chest slamming an axe into a tree stump with the letters 'G.30.S' written on the stump and the letters 'PKI' written in its roots.[30] The image is an example of incitement but it is not proof that the military ordered the killings or that it initiated and implemented the killings as a systematic campaign. A challenge for researchers,

28 See for example, Crouch, *The Army and Politics in Indonesia*, pp. 141–142; Robert Cribb, 'Political Genocides in Postcolonial Asia', in Donald Bloxham and Anthony Dirk Moses (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Genocide Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 453.

29 Such accounts have been available to researchers since the time of the killings. They increased in volume during the early 1990s and especially after the end of the New Order regime in 1998. See, for example, Lucien Rey, 'Dossier of the Indonesian Drama', *New Left Review*, Issue 1/36, April 1966, pp. 26–40; Ruth McVey and Benedict Anderson, *A Preliminary Analysis of the October 1, 1965 Coup in Indonesia* (Ithaca, NY: Modern Indonesia Project, Cornell University, 1971); Robert Cribb (ed.), *The Indonesian Killings of 1965–1966: Studies From Java and Bali* (Clayton, Vic.: Centre of Southeast Asian Studies, Monash University, 1991).

30 Printed in *Angkatan Bersendjata*, 8 October 1965.

therefore, has been to prove military intent behind the violence. It is now possible to do this by comparing existing oral testimony with the military's own internal account of what happened. The following sections outline Ibrahim Kadir's eyewitness account and the military's own records to build a more complete picture of what was occurring at these facilities.

4 Ibrahim Kadir's Account (1–11 October 1965)

Ibrahim Kadir was born in 1942 in Takengon.[31] In 1965 he was working as a primary school teacher. He was also a prominent performer of *didong*, a traditional form of sung poetry. He was not a member of the Indonesian Communist Party. He remembered the PKI as being quite popular in Takengon. It drew its membership from both local people and migrants from other regions. Its members in the district included teachers, civil servants, artists and peasants. It had even managed to recruit a military corporal.

Kadir remembered that he first became aware of news about the action of the G30S in Jakarta on or just after 1 October, when he heard via word of mouth that there had been what he described as a 'PKI rebellion' in Jakarta. He remembered thinking that this event was unlikely to affect him in faraway Takengon. Approximately one week later, Kadir remembered that Aceh's Military Commander, Ishak Djuarsa, came to Takengon. Djuarsa was a staunch anti-communist. He had been trained at the U.S. Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth in Kansas and gained notoriety in 1963 for a campaign against members of the Chinese community in Bandung, whom he suspected of being aligned with the PKI.[32]

Upon his arrival in Takengon, Kadir recalled, Djuarsa met members of the district's military leadership at a building in the centre of town. Kadir also remembered that later on the same day Djuarsa held a public meeting at Takengon's Musara Alun sports field, a large open-air field close to the town centre. Civilians were instructed to attend this meeting, where Djuarsa announced to the gathered audience: 'the PKI are *kafir*. I [Djuarsa] will destroy them to their roots; if in the kampung you find members of the PKI but do

31 The following sections, when referring to Ibrahim Kadir's recollections of this period, have been drawn from my interviews with Ibrahim Kadir held in Takengon on 7 and 8 February 2009.

32 David Jenkins, *Suharto and His Generals: Indonesian Military Politics, 1975–1983* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell Modern Indonesia Project, Southeast Asia Program, Cornell University, 1984), p. 105.

not kill them it will be you who we punish'.[33] Kadir recalled that people were scared after hearing Djuarsa's announcement. They understood that they were being ordered to help the military to kill members of the PKI.

Kadir says that many people in Takengon formed the opinion at this time that it would be better to be seen to be assisting the military, rather than to risk being targeted. Not only had Djuarsa just told them that they would be 'punished' if they did not participate but, as will be outlined in further detail below, Aceh's provincial government, then under the control of the military, had issued orders on 4 October for civilians to participate in the military's annihilation campaign.

Ibrahim Kadir remembered that on 11 October he was in his school classroom, where he was teaching his year five students. Suddenly, a soldier, named Abdullatif, burst in through the door. A further fifteen armed militia members stood outside the door, training their guns at Kadir's head. They told his students: 'we are taking your teacher into town'. Kadir was then taken to a detention centre, a state-run jail in the middle of the town.

Kadir recognised the militia group members who had helped to arrest him. They been trained by the military in the district since the early 1950s, initially to assist the military in crushing the Darul Islam movement (1949–1963), an Islamic rebellion that for a time controlled significant parts of Aceh, West Java and South Sulawesi. They were now being used by the military in its attack on the PKI.

Kadir remembered that he was held at this detention centre for the next twenty-five nights. He says the detainees with whom he was held knew they were going to be killed. They spoke about the various sites to which other detainees had been taken to be killed. They were very scared. Each night during his detention Kadir was forced to assist the military to prepare other detainees for execution. He was told that this would help him secure release. Each night, he would place a hessian sack over each selected detainee's head and bind his or her hands by tying their thumbs before their body. He would then help to load the prisoners on to the back of military trucks. These trucks were then driven to the military-controlled killing sites. Kadir was forced by military staff to attend several of the executions.

Kadir recalled: 'these people were taken straight away, their heads were stuffed into sacks and they were put on to the back of trucks like rubbish being thrown away. They were all shaking, they all knew they were going to be killed. It was a very disturbing sight for me to see'.

33 This is Kadir's recollection of what Djuarsa said. Similar accounts have been given to me by other individuals who also attended the meeting.

The military's own documents, found as part of the Indonesian genocide files, closely corroborate Kadir's account. They show that Ishak Djuarsa did indeed travel to Takengon on 7 October 1965.[34] They also show that he met members of the military leadership before meeting civilian leaders throughout the province. Records of these meetings show that the military leadership and the provincial government in Aceh jointly issued documents confirming that the government had committed to 'assist' the military in its so-called annihilation campaign.[35] The military documents similarly show that Djuarsa routinely held public meetings as part of a coordination tour through the province between 4 and 11 October.[36] It is also documented that mass arrests and killings began in Takengon from 11 October.[37] Likewise, it can be shown that these arrests increased in intensity in the district from 14 October,[38] the date that systematic mass killings began throughout Aceh. The information found within the Indonesian genocide files thus provides independent evidence to corroborate Kadir's account.

5 An Eyewitness Account of the 'Detain/Kill' Process

The following section will focus on Ibrahim Kadir's account of the killings that he witnessed at military-controlled killing sites connected to the 'detain/kill' detention centre where he was held.[39] Kadir related this account to me over a number of days when I travelled with him to the sites discussed below.

The first site Kadir took me to was a mountain pass on Burlintang Hill (*Bukit Burlintang*). He told me that trucks from the detention centre would come here at night. The detainees would be taken off the back of the truck and would have their throats slit before they were pushed off the embankment. He remembers that every few nights the killing site would need to be moved

34 Melvin, *The Army and the Indonesian Genocide*, p. 143.

35 Copies of such documents have been found in Banda Aceh: ibid., pp. 125–126.

36 'Chronologis', in *Laporan Tahunan Lengkap Kodam-I/Kohanda Atjeh, Tahun 1965* (Banda Aceh: Kodam-I Banda Aceh, 1 February 1966).

37 It appears that the military played a particularly direct role in the killings in Central Aceh: see ibid., pp. 176–177, 210–213. The military recorded a figure of 517 public deaths in the district during this period. See 'Attachment: Intelligence Map', in *Laporan Tahunan Lengkap Kodam-I/Kohanda Atjeh, Tahun 1965* (Banda Aceh: Kodam-I Banda Aceh, 1 February 1966), p. 17.

38 'Chronologis', p. 210.

39 The following account is also taken from my interviews with Ibrahim Kadir, Takengon, Central Aceh, 7–8 February 2009.

a little further along the road when it began to smell too rotten as the bodies decomposed on the side of the mountain.

Kadir also witnessed killings in the mountains at Karang Debar. He remembers that villagers at this site were told to dig a mass grave site before the detainees were brought on the back of the trucks. The detainees were then killed and thrown into the hole. Today stone markers mark the mass grave and it is partially covered by a coffee plantation.

Kadir witnessed killings, too, at Tritip Bridge, one of the main bridges into Takengon, ten minutes from the centre of town. He recalls that detainees were brought to this site to be killed and their bodies were buried next to the river. Kadir remembers that big fires were lit at night on both sides of the road, metres from the bridge, next to a steep stone cliff face, to act as a warning and as a check point. When the trucks arrived at night, villagers were asked by the military 'how many do you want?' before that number of detainees was handed over to the villagers, who were then compelled to kill them. After the killing, the villagers would sit at local kiosks and drink alcohol to try and numb themselves. Killings also took place at the Ilang Bridge, a high bridge over a fast running river. Here, Kadir says, the military carried out the killings directly; detainees were asked if they would prefer to be shot or decapitated, before their bodies were thrown down into the river.

Killings also took place in the sugar plantations around Takengon. Kadir recalls that the family members of detainees were told that they were being 'processed' in Banda Aceh when in fact they were being taken to be killed. This meant that family members did not know what had happened to their loved ones. Kadir believes that 'thousands' of people were killed during the systematic mass killing phase of the military's annihilation campaign in Central Aceh.[40]

6 Known Detention and Kill Sites in Aceh

Below is a list of known 'detain/kill' detention sites and their associated kill sites in Aceh. These are sites where people I spoke to personally knew people who had been killed or who had participated in the killings of people at these sites.[41]

40 It will be impossible to arrive at a more accurate figure without a sophisticated forensic investigation. See below for a discussion of the estimated number of people killed in Aceh during the time of the genocide.

41 Data taken from ibid. Also, Jess Melvin, 'Mechanics of Mass Murder: A Case for Understanding the Indonesian Killings as Genocide', *Journal of Genocide Research*, Vol. 19, No. 4, 2017, pp. 487–511.

Place of detention	Associated kill sites
Banda Aceh • Military Police Headquarters • Military training site at Mata Ie • Government offices	**Banda Aceh** • Lhoknga beach • In front of the military training site at Mata Ie
North Aceh • District Military Headquarters • State run jails	**North Aceh** • Meunasah Lhok • Blang Padang • Cot Panglima
Central Aceh • State run jails • Government owned buildings (including schools)	**Central Aceh** • Bukit Burlintang • Karang Debar • Tritip Bridge • Ilang Bridge • Plantations
West Aceh • State run jails • Government offices	**West Aceh** • 'Near the sea' • 'In the mountains'
South Aceh • District Military Headquarters	**South Aceh** • Ujung Batu • Alu Bane
East Aceh • District Military Headquarters	**East Aceh** • 'X Mountain' • Plantations

FIGURE 7.1 'Detain/kill' detention sites and associated kill sites in Aceh

As this list of sites is taken from recollections communicated in seventy interviews I conducted between 2009 and 2012, and only lists sites with which these interviewees had a personal connection, it is likely to be only a partial list of 'detain/kill' detention sites and their associated kill sites in Aceh. Even from this short list, however, it is apparent that the military had organised a system for killing in the province.

The purpose of these 'detain/kill' sites, as distinct from the long-term detention sites that would later be established throughout the country, was to process detainees swiftly for death as part of the systematic mass killing phase of the military's annihilation campaign. Two long-term detention sites were apparently established in Aceh.[42] However, it appears the majority of prisoners in the province were killed prior to the establishment of these sites. Based on my interviews and analysis of the available military documents, I estimate that approximately 10,000 people were killed in Aceh during the time of the genocide.[43] Adjusted for population size, the scale and intensity of the killings in Aceh appears to have been on par with the killings experienced in Central Java, a province that is believed to seen some of the highest killing rates, with 100,000 killings recorded.[44]

There was also a coordinated system of transportation to facilitate the movement of detainees to killing sites. A document recovered from North Sumatra, dated 1 April 1966, provides evidence of a formal record of a system that was used by the military and military sponsored death squads to keep track of the transportation of detainees to killing sites during the systematic mass killing phase of violence in that province.[45] It is believed that a similar system of 'receipting' (*bon*) was used throughout the country.[46]

---

42 These long-term detention centres were located on Aceh's western coast. 'Map of detention centres across Indonesia', produced by Tapol (1976).

43 John R. Bowen proposes 3,000 people were killed in Aceh in 1965–1966. John R. Bowen, *Sumatran Politics and Poetics: Gayo History, 1900–1989* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), p. 272. Rusdi Sufi proposes the same figure. Rusdi Sufi, *Pernak-Pernik Sejarah Aceh* (Banda Aceh: Badan Arsip dan Perpustakaan Aceh, 2009), p. 194. Sumatra's Inter-Regional Military Commander, Ahmad Mokoginta, told the American Consul in Medan, North Sumatra, on 25 December 1965 that 6,000 people had been killed in Aceh. Cited in Tsai Yen-ling and Douglas Kammen, 'Anti-communist Violence and Ethnic Chinese in Medan, North Sumatra', in Douglas Kammen and Katharine McGregor (eds), *The Contours of Mass Violence in Indonesia, 1965–68* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2012), p. 139. I have estimated that up to 10,000 people were killed in Aceh based on military reporting that an additional 1,941 people were killed in Aceh during the phase of public killings in the province (7–13 October) and due to the sheer scale of the killings uncovered during my research. Jess Melvin, 'Documenting Genocide', *Inside Indonesia*, 30 September 2015. Available online: www.insideindonesia.org/documenting-genocide. A more accurate estimate is not possible without extensive forensic research.

44 Douglas Kammen and Katherine McGregor, 'Introduction' in Kammen and McGregor (eds), *The Contours of Mass Violence in Indonesia, 1965–68*, p. 17.

45 'Daft[a]r Kader PKI Yang Diamankan', in Amir Hasan Nast BA, *Embun Berdarah* (self-published, undated manuscript). I was given a copy of this document by Stanley, then a Commissioner for the Indonesian Human Rights Commission, in February 2009.

46 Such '*bon*' documents are regularly referenced in oral history accounts. Jess Melvin and Annie Pohlman, 'Crimes Against Humanity in Indonesia, 1965–1966', in Barbora Hola,

The document contains two lists. On the right-hand side of the document can be found the names of thirty-two detainees, who are described as 'PKI cadre who have been secured'. On the left-hand side of the document is a list of military-controlled detention sites where the listed detainees had been held, alongside the names of the military-controlled killing sites to which they were subsequently taken to be executed. This type of document is described as a 'receipt' (*bon*) and it was a way for the military and its death squads to keep a track of the people that they were killing during the systematic mass killing phase of the genocide. This document is further proof that the 'detain/kill' process was being recorded by the military and was highly coordinated and systematic. It is also evidence of the way in which 'detain/kill' sites were used for a very specific function within this campaign, namely to process such detainees for death.

7 Overview

During the Indonesian genocide, the military established different types of detention centres during different phases of the annihilation campaign and for different purposes. Although long-term detention camps have been examined in the greatest detail, 'detain/kill' detention sites were also established during the systematic mass killing phase of the military's annihilation campaign. These 'detain/kill' sites were used specifically for the purpose of systematically exterminating the detainees. It is important to be able to differentiate among these different types of detention camps in order to form a more comprehensive understanding of the military's intent. It is also useful to gain a fuller picture of how the vast bulk of victims were killed.

The genocide in Aceh was shockingly swift and brutal. It helped to set the pace of the Indonesian genocide nationally. Ibrahim Kadir's experiences, as he became caught up within this campaign in Central Aceh, provide unique insight into the 'detain/kill' stage of this campaign. His experiences, when coupled with the information that can now be found in the military's own internal records of these events, suggest that rather than simply being a milder adjunct to the killing process, detention played a pivotal role in the military's annihilation campaign.

Hollie Nyseth Brehm and Maartje Weertje Weerdesteijn (eds), *Oxford Handbook on Atrocity Crimes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, forthcoming).

References

40 Hari Kegagalan 'G.30.S': 1 Oktober-10 November 1966 (Jakarta: Staf Angkatan Bersendjata, Pusat Sedjarah Angkatan Bersendjata, 1965).

Adam, Asvi Warman, 'Suharto's Grievous Human Rights Abuses: The Case of Buru Island', in Saskia Wieringa, Jess Melvin and Annie Pohlman (eds), *The International People's Tribunal for 1965 and the Indonesian Genocide* (New York: Routledge, 2019), pp. 80–95.

Analysis of Responsibility: Defence Speech of Sudisman, General Secretary of the Indonesian Communist Party at his Trial before the Special Military Tribunal, Jakarta, 21 July 1967 (Melbourne: Works Co-operative, 1975).

Anderson, Benedict R. O'G. and Ruth T. McVey, *A Preliminary Analysis of the October 1, 1965 Coup in Indonesia* (Ithaca, NY: Modern Indonesia Project, Cornell University, 1971).

Anderson, Benedict R. O'G., *Java in a Time of Revolution: Occupation and Resistance, 1944–1946* (Jakarta: Equinox Publishing, 2006, originally 1972).

Bowen, John R., *Sumatran Politics and Poetics: Gayo History, 1900–1989* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991).

Cribb, Robert (ed.), *The Indonesian Killings of 1965–1966: Studies from Java and Bali* (Clayton, Vic.: Centre of Southeast Asian Studies, Monash University, 1991).

Cribb, Robert, 'Political Genocides in Postcolonial Asia', in Donald Bloxham and Anthony Dirk Moses (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Genocide Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 445–465.

Crouch, Harold, *The Army and Politics in Indonesia* (Jakarta: Equinox Publishing, 2007, originally 1978).

Fealy, Greg, *The Release of Indonesia's Political Prisoners: Domestic Versus Foreign Policy, 1975–1979* (Clayton, Vic.: Centre of Southeast Asian Studies, Monash University, 1995).

Hindley, Donald, *The Communist Party of Indonesia, 1951–1963* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966).

Jenkins, David, *Suharto and His Generals: Indonesian Military Politics, 1975–1983* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell Modern Indonesia Project, Southeast Asia Program, Cornell University, 1984).

Kammen, Douglas, and Faizah Zakaria 'Detention in Mass Violence: Policy and Practice in Indonesia, 1965–1968', *Critical Asian Studies*, Vol. 44, No. 3 (2012), pp. 441–466.

Kammen, Douglas and Katharine McGregor (eds), *The Contours of Mass Violence in Indonesia, 1965–86* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2012).

Kammen, Douglas and Katherine McGregor, 'Introduction: The Contours of Mass Violence in Indonesia, 1965–68', in Douglas Kammen and Katharine McGregor

(eds), *The Contours of Mass Violence in Indonesia, 1965–68* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2012), pp. 1–24.

Laporan Tahunan Lengkap Kodam-I/Kohanda Atjeh, Tahun 1965 (Banda Aceh: Kodam-I Banda Aceh, 1 February 1966).

McGregor, Katharine, Jess Melvin and Annie Pohlman (eds), *The Indonesian Genocide of 1965: Causes, Dynamics and Legacies* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2018).

'Map of Detention Centres across Indonesia', produced by Tapol (1976). Available online: http://intersections.anu.au/issue10/pohlman.html.

Melvin, Jess, 'Documenting Genocide', *Inside Indonesia*, 30 September 2015. Available online: www.insideindonesia.org/documenting-genocide.

Melvin, Jess, 'Mechanics of Mass Murder: A Case for Understanding the Indonesian Killings as Genocide', *Journal of Genocide Research*, Vol. 19, No. 4, 2017, pp. 487–511.

Melvin, Jess, 'There's Now Proof that Soeharto Orchestrated the 1965 Killings', *Indonesia at Melbourne*, 26 June 2018. Available online: http://indonesiaatmelbourne.unimelb.edu.au/theres-now-clear-proof-that-soeharto-orchestrated-the-1965-killings/ [accessed 30 August 2018].

Melvin, Jess and Annie Pohlman, 'Crimes Against Humanity in Indonesia, 1965–1966', in Barbora Hola, Hollie Nyseth Brehm and Maartje Weertje Weerdesteijn (eds), *Oxford Handbook on Atrocity Crimes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, forthcoming).

Melvin, Jess, *The Army and the Indonesian Genocide: Mechanics of Mass Murder* (New York: Routledge, 2018).

Nast, Amir Hasan, *Embun Berdarah* (self-published, undated manuscript).

Nugroho Notosusanto and Ismail Saleh, *The Coup Attempt of the 'September 30 Movement' in Indonesia* (Jakarta: P.T. Pembimbing Masa-Djakarta, 1968).

Oppenheimer, Joshua (director), *The Look of Silence*, Final Cut for Real, 2014.

Rey, Lucien, 'Dossier of the Indonesian Drama', *New Left Review*, Issue 1/36 (April 1966), pp. 26–40.

Robinson, Geoffrey, *Killing Season: A History of the Indonesian Massacres* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2018).

Roosa, John, *Pretext for Mass Murder: The 30th September Movement and Suharto's Coup d'Etat in Indonesia* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006).

Roosa, John, 'The Truths of Torture: Victim's Memories and State Histories in Indonesia', *Indonesia*, Issue 85, Vol. 4, 2008, pp. 31–49.

Roosa, John, Ayu Ratih and Hilmar Farid, 'Pengantar: Sejarah Lisan dan Ingatan Sosia', in John Roosa, Ayu Ratih and Hilmar Farid (eds), *Tahun yang Tak Pernah Berakhir: Memahami Pengalaman Korban 65, esai-esai sejarah lisan* (Jakarta: Lembaga Studi dan Advokasi Masyarakat and Tim Relawan untuk Kemanusiaan Institut Sejarah Sosial Indonesia, 2004), pp. 1–23.

Rusdi Sufi, *Pernak-Pernik Sejarah Aceh* (Banda Aceh: Badan Arsip dan Perpustakaan Aceh, 2009).

Tsai, Yen-ling and Douglas Kammen, 'Anti-communist Violence and Ethnic Chinese in Medan, North Sumatra', in Douglas Kammen and Katharine McGregor (eds), *The Contours of Mass Violence in Indonesia, 1965–68* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2012), pp. 131–155.

Van der Kroef, Justus M. 'Indonesia's Political Prisoners', *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 49, No. 4 (1976), pp. 625–647.

Wieringa, Saskia, Jess Melvin and Annie Pohlman (eds), *The International People's Tribunal for 1965 and the Indonesian Genocide* (New York: Routledge, 2019).

CHAPTER 8

Torture Camps in Indonesia, 1965–1970

Annie Pohlman

Abstract

Between 1965 and approximately 1970, a system of mass political detention evolved in Indonesia to hold hundreds of thousands of 'suspected communists'. Those accused of supporting the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) were rounded up in waves of mass arrests and detained unlawfully in a vast network of prisons, military facilities, confiscated buildings and other ad hoc detention centres set up to hold the growing political prisoner population. Most detainees were interrogated and tortured, particularly during the early periods of their incarceration. Places of interrogation were kept separate from places of detention, sometimes as a separate room or rooms within a larger detention centre, sometimes as a separate facility to which detainees were brought for interrogation. The separation of spaces for detention and interrogation developed first for practical reasons, in view of the large number of suspects being processed by the military authorities. Over time, however, the spaces for torture and interrogation came to define for those authorities the purpose of the purge.

Keywords

Indonesian Communist Party – political prisoners – torture – interrogation – detention camps

1 The Devil's House

> [We were captured] by a group of uniformed military soldiers at our hideout and then we were taken to Gunung Sahari Road, to a former Chinese school which it seems had now been made into a detention and interrogation centre. The moment I arrived, I knew straight away why this place, which had once been a school for children, was now known as a 'devil's house' amongst the detainees.
>
> At that place, evidently the interrogators' job was to interrogate the detainees, and they behaved like devils with no humanity at all. I was

©

> put into a small cell where the walls were mottled with blood. I heard the screams, the howling in pain coming from the interrogation room. [It was] my friend Lami, who was interrogated first, and then it was my turn.[1]

The late Ibu Sudjinah described the former school located on Gunung Sahari Road III in Indonesia's capital, Jakarta, as a 'devil's house (*rumah setan*)'. In her autobiography, *Tossed Down by the Rising Waves*, she names a number of these devil's houses: both those in which she was imprisoned and those described to her by fellow political detainees. The friend she mentions was Ibu Sulami, a fellow leader of the communist-aligned women's organisation, Gerwani (Gerakan Wanita Indonesia, Indonesian Women's Movement). Whilst in hiding over the previous eighteen months, Sudjinah and Sulami – along with some of their other comrades from Gerwani and other communist organisations – had published a clandestine pamphlet denouncing the military government which had taken over the country in late 1965, the 'New Order' regime (1965–1998). They were captured on the same day in mid-February 1967 and taken together to the Gunung Sahari interrogation centre. Both were tortured by military personnel over several days before being moved to another detention facility. Sudjinah spent sixteen years as a political prisoner, and was finally released in 1983; Sulami was released in 1984.

Sujinah and Sulami were amongst the hundreds of thousands of Indonesians rounded up by the Indonesian Army between late 1965 and approximately 1970; estimates for the number of political prisoners range from 500,000 to 1.5 million.[2] These arrests began in the days following an attempted coup on 1 October 1965, a coup which the Indonesian Army used as a pretext to seize control of the state.[3] The Army blamed the coup on its main political rival,

---

1 Sudjinah, *Terempas Gelombang Pasang* (Jakarta: Pustaka Utan Kayu, 2003), p. 20, emphasis in original. All translations are mine. *Ibu* is a polite honorific for an adult woman in Indonesian; *Pak* applies to a man. I wish to thank Jess Melvin, Robert Cribb and Catherine Pohlman for their keen insights and feedback which helped to improve this paper.

2 See Greg Fealy, 'The Release of Indonesia's Political Prisoners: Domestic Versus Foreign Policy, 1975–1979,' *Monash Asia Institute, Working Paper No. 94* (Clayton, Vic.: Monash University Press, 1995), pp. 42–44. One of the highest estimates was given by the Indonesian Ministry of Home Affairs in 1985, at 1,479,000 (quoted in Amnesty International, 'Statement of Amnesty International's Concerns in Indonesia', AI Index: ASA 21/033/1985, 30 August 1985, p. 3. https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/ASA210331985ENGLISH.PDF).

3 On this coup, see John Roosa, *Pretext for Mass Murder: The September 30th Movement and Suharto's Coup d'Etat in Indonesia* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006). On the military's takeover, see Jess Melvin, *The Army and the Indonesian Genocide: Mechanics of Mass Murder* (New York: Routledge, 2018).

the Indonesian Communist Party (Partai Komunis Indonesia, PKI), and then mobilised its forces to wipe out the PKI's mass support base: with the help of co-opted civilian militias, the military killed an estimated half a million communists between late 1965 and early 1966.[4] During the months that followed the coup, a system of mass political detention evolved in Indonesia to hold the rising number of detained 'suspected communists'. Those accused of supporting the PKI were rounded up in waves of mass arrests and detained under executive order in a vast network of prisons, military facilities, confiscated buildings and other ad hoc detention centres set up to hold the growing political prisoner population. A categorisation system soon developed within this political detention structure, defining detainees in terms of their perceived involvement in the PKI – ranging from party leaders through to the families and associates of local cadres – which determined whether detainees spent months, years or even decades incarcerated.[5] (See also the chapter by Setiawan in this volume.) The majority of detainees were interrogated, particularly during the early periods of their detention, and most interrogations involved torture.[6]

MAP 8.1 Java and Bali

4 On the estimates of the number of people killed, see Robert Cribb, 'Introduction: Problems in the Historiography of the Killings in Indonesia', in Robert Cribb (ed.), *The Indonesian Killings 1965–1966: Studies from Java and Bali* (Clayton, Vic.: Centre of Southeast Asian Studies, Monash University, 1990), pp. 11–14.

5 On the broader detention camp system, and the orders issued regarding these mass detentions, see Douglas Kammen and Faizah Zakaria, 'Detention in Mass Violence: Policy and Practice in Indonesia, 1965–1968', *Critical Asian Studies*, 44, no. 3 (2012), pp. 441–466.

6 On the likely frequency of torture within interrogations at this time, see John Roosa, 'The Truths of Torture: Victims' Memories and State Histories in Indonesia', *Indonesia*, 85 (April 2008), p. 32.

In this chapter I focus on the places where these interrogations took place. I draw on the testimonies of a handful of survivors to describe a few of these torture centres and to explore the experiences of moving between spaces of interrogation/torture and detention within the concentration camp system. From these limited and often partial accounts, it seems, first, that these places of interrogation were often separate from places of detention. The torture centres could be a separate room or rooms within a larger detention centre or a separate facility to which detainees were brought for interrogation, such as the Gunung Sahari centre described by Sudjinah. Second, the separation of interrogation spaces from detention appears to have served – at least in the perceptions of those who passed through these places – a range of functions, from seemingly logistical and practical uses through to being a means of inflicting harm on detainees. Finally, the separation of interrogation and detention spaces appears to have developed rapidly, certainly within a couple of months following the coup, with the designation of specific and specialised torture/interrogation centres happening within this period.

The separation of interrogation spaces within the broader detention system also reveals a number of paradoxes about the purpose of this camp system and, critically, about the role of interrogation and torture in the camps. The first paradox lies in the function of the detention camp system itself as both a mechanism that allegedly 'protected' communists and, conversely, as an integral means of eliminating the PKI. Army authorities used the euphemistic language of 'securing (*mengamankan*)' PKI members in the camps as a way to protect them from the mobs of supposedly enraged civilians who wanted to lynch them, while at the same time creating the vast concentration camp system for the 'sake of *keamanan* or "public" security'; that is, to protect the public from those in the camps.[7] Through a widespread propaganda campaign demonising the PKI that began in early October 1965, the army legitimised the mass repression of communists; these camps were the structures created to hold people now deemed to be dangerous enemies.[8] As Vannessa Hearman has shown in her study of East Java, however, these camps 'were not the safe

7 Benedict Anderson, 'The 1965 Massacre in Indonesia and Its Legacy', *Counterpunch*, 24 January 2014, https://www.counterpunch.org/2014/01/24/the-1965-massacre-in-indonesia-and-its-legacy/. As Jess Melvin shows in the case of Aceh, although there were civilian-led pogroms in some places, this violence was incited and supported by the army. See Melvin, *The Army and the Indonesian Genocide*, pp. 162–240. Cf. Mark Winward, 'Capture from Below: Civil-Military Relations during Indonesia's Anticommunist Violence, 1965–66', *Indonesia*, 106 (October 2018), pp. 111–136.

8 See Saskia E. Wieringa and Nursyahbani Katjasungkana, *Propaganda and the Genocide in Indonesia: Imagined Evil* (London: Routledge, 2019).

havens that detainees were promised when they were captured, when many of their captors had said they were being "taken to safety" (*diamankan*)'.[9] Rather, as Hearman and others have shown, the camps were the primary source of victims killed in mass executions and therefore played a key role in the extermination campaign against the PKI; the majority of those killed were 'borrowed (*dibon*)' from the camps, driven in trucks to remote sites, and executed by teams of military and civilian militias.[10] (See also the Melvin chapter in this volume.) This paradox goes to the heart of the army's strategy to eliminate its main rival but also to present itself as the legitimate successor state; the army was allegedly restoring order, and rounding up and 'securing' the enemies of the people.

The second paradox lies in the function of torture within the camp system, and its integral role in the extermination campaign against the PKI. It also is intimately connected to the army's claimed legitimacy. As I explore in this chapter, on the one hand, torture in interrogations was an essential part of the camp system, yet on the other, interrogations were deliberately kept separate within this system. The interrogations were essential because they delivered the 'evidence' needed to justify the destruction of the PKI. Building on Elaine Scarry's concept of fiction masquerading as motive for torture, John Roosa has rightly argued that 'the Indonesian Army, in attacking the PKI, began with a fantasy [that the PKI had committed the coup and was attempting to take over the country], tortured its prisoners during interrogations to make them confirm that fantasy, and then used the information derived from torture sessions as … actionable intelligence'.[11]

This chapter focuses on this second paradox. To attempt to understand why interrogations were demarcated in places separate from detention – when these interrogations were so essential for justifying the camp system itself – I draw on survivors' testimonies about their experiences of being rounded up, interrogated, and 'classified' within the camp system. These testimonies give us some insight into these practices which developed rapidly within a few months of the 1 October coup, but they do not resolve the paradox of separating interrogations from detention. In this discussion, I speculate about how existing police/military police interrogation procedures may have influenced

9 Vannessa Hearman, *Unmarked Graves: Death and Survival in the Anti-Communist Violence in East Java, Indonesia* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2018), p. 90.

10 See Rinto Tri Hasworo, 'Penangkapan dan Pembunuhan di Jawa Tengah Setelah G-30-S', in John Roosa, Ayu Ratih and Hilmar Farid (eds), *Tahun yang Tak Pernah Berakhir: Memahami Pengalaman Korban 65* (Jakarta: ELSAM, ISSI and TRuK, 2004), pp. 25–60.

11 Roosa, 'The Truths of Torture', p. 34. See Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (New York: Oxford University Press), pp. 28–29.

the designation of specific spaces for interrogation and torture. In this sense, I would argue that the mimicry of those procedures may have served to reinforce the semblance of legitimacy for those participating in the interrogation and torture of so many. I also contend that the drive to begin the system of mass interrogations was fundamental to the development and expansion of the detention system, the prisoner classification system, and the mass killings of detainees. Lastly, in the conclusion, I argue that these processes took on a self-sustaining logic, which drove the hasty expansion of the camp system to hold hundreds of thousands.

In order to contextualise this discussion of torture centres following 1965, I must note first that violence was endemic within the detention camp system, and much of it amounted to torture or other forms of ill-treatment. Torture involves the deliberate infliction of severe pain or suffering on the victim, not only as part of interrogation, but also as a way to punish, coerce or intimidate. Many arbitrary punishments used outside the interrogation rooms against detainees were also torture.[12] Other forms of violence within the camp system were ill-treatment, such as severe malnutrition and other forms of deprivation, forced labour, and indeed, seemingly endless forms of humiliation used by guards against detainees.[13] While the focus in this chapter is on torture, which was an integral part of interrogations and the spaces where they were conducted, it is critical to note that torture and violence were in no way limited to interrogations.

2 Creating Places for Interrogation and Torture

Devil's house was the name that Sudjinah used to denote a torture camp. As a senior leader of a communist organisation, she needed skill, careful planning and some luck to evade capture for nearly a year and a half. While building and maintaining their underground network, Sudjinah and her comrades heard chilling stories about those who had been rounded up and taken to these torture centres. As she explained, 'everyone who entered these devil's houses,

12 On contemporary differentiations between what is considered torture and ill-treatment, see Manfred Nowark and Elizabeth McArthur, *The United Nations Convention Against Torture: A Commentary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 77–79.

13 On the many forms of violence perpetrated against detainees within the detention camp system, and how these forms amounted to torture and ill-treatment, see Annie Pohlman, *Women, Sexual Violence and the Indonesian Killings of 1965–66* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015), pp. 47–62.

none could ever escape the torture meted out by those devils wearing human faces. Many only left those places because death came for them'.[14]

By the time Sudjinah and Sulami were captured in early 1967, distinct interrogation facilities were well-established, separate from the main detention centres. The Gunung Sahari centre was but one of several in the capital, though other cities also had designated torture centres within their larger detention networks. In Jakarta, there were several such places. Aside from Gunung Sahari, other notorious centres included Gang Buntu and the former Infico film studio on Rawa Kemiri Road in Kebayoran Lama; Tanah Abang Street; Kramat V Street; and, as many survivors have noted with grim irony, the building on Latuharhari Street which later became the office of Indonesia's National Commission for Human Rights (*Komisi Nasional Hak Asasi Manusia*, Komnas HAM). Within the Jakarta network were also numerous military command posts – particularly the Regional and District Military Command centres (*Komando Daerah Militer*, KODAM, and *Komando Distrikt Militer*, KODIM) – and buildings near them which were transformed into interrogation centres, such as the KODIM 0505 in East Jakarta; the military barracks at Air Mancur; the 'Lidikus' centre (a contraction of '*penyelidikan khusus*' or 'special investigation') next to the KODAM V Jaya at Lapangan Banteng near the city's central Merdeka square; the centre on Budi Kemuliaan street in front of KODIM 0501 in central Jakarta; and the KODAM/military police post on Guntur Street in Cimanggis. Across Indonesia, other places designated for interrogations also tended to be located in cities, as central hubs for interrogation within the district's detention network. Examples of these include a house on Melati Street in Denpasar, Bali; a former Chinese school on Gandhi Street in Medan, North Sumatra; two former schools in Malang, East Java, one on Sawahan Street, the other on Nusakambangan Street; and the Jefferson library in Yogyakarta, amongst many others.[15]

Places that were turned into centres specifically for interrogation and torture sat within the much larger detention network. This broader network was rapidly and haphazardly formed, as mass arrests began at an intense pace from early October 1965 and stretched into 1966. Further waves of arrests continued until 1970, most of them the outcome of 'cleansing' operations in specific

14 Sudjinah, *Terempas*, pp. 27–28.

15 On these centres, see, for example, Margiyono and Kurniawan Tri Yunanto, *Neraka Rezim Soeharto: Misteri Tempat Penyiksaan Orde Baru* (Jakarta: SPASI and VHRBOOK, 2007); 'Liputuan Khusus: Pengakuan Algojo', *Tempo*, 1–7 October 2012, pp. 50–125; John Roosa, Ayu Ratih and Hilmar Farid (eds), *Tahun yang Tak Pernah Berakhir: Memahami Pengalaman Korban 65, Esai-Esai Sejarah Lisan* (Jakarta: ELSAM, TRuK and ISSI, 2004); Carmel Budiardjo, *Surviving Indonesia's Gulag* (London: Cassell, 1996).

government departments, or military operations aimed at wiping out clandestine PKI networks.[16] Faizah Zakaria and Douglas Kammen have compared the timing of these arrests with the release of Indonesian Army policies regarding the arrest, detention and then categorisation of the hundreds of thousands of political prisoners. They show that, within six weeks of the 1 October coup, the detainee classification system had been established under the authority of the newly formed command, Kopkamtib (Operational Command for the Restoration of Security and Order).[17]

The classification system began in November 1965 with a three-tier system. Category A were supposedly 'hard core Communists who played a major role [in the coup]',[18] and it was mainly these prisoners who were later brought to trial and who spent the longest periods in detention. Category B were 'those people who played a secondary role in the coup' and who spent usually more than a decade in detention without trial, and Category C were 'fellow travellers' who spent comparatively shorter periods in detention.[19] These classifications were further refined at later times; for example, the Cs were subdivided into C1, C2 and C3 based on their perceived level of affiliation or activity within the PKI or its associated organisations; and, after most of the C detainees were released by the early 1970s, further classifications of 'X' and even 'Y' were introduced to denote those not yet placed as an 'A' or a 'B'.[20] Whatever the changing designations over time, critically, Zakaria and Kammen argue that the introduction of the classification system by mid-November 'fuelled' the mass arrests. As they argue, this system 'implicated millions of people who did not take part in the [coup, and] this not only justified widespread arrests, it encouraged them'.[21] However the mass arrests were driven, hundreds of thousands were rounded up, generating a prisoner population that existing detention facilities could not contain.[22] Regular prisons were quickly overwhelmed, as were the military

16 For example, the 'Kalong' Operation in 1968 and the eradication of the PKI base in South Blitar in East Java: see Justus M. van der Kroef, 'Indonesian Communism since the 1965 Coup' *Pacific Affairs*, 43, no. 1 (1970), pp. 34–60; Hearman, *Unmarked Graves*, pp. 138–170.

17 Kammen and Zakaria, 'Detention in Mass Violence', pp. 443–446.

18 Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia, Stockholm, *The Intolerable Tolerance: A Short Review of the Collapse of the Indonesian Communist Party and the Birth of the New Order in Indonesia* (Stockholm: Brod, 1972), pp. 41–42.

19 Ibid., pp. 42, 43.

20 See, for example, Fealy, *The Release of Indonesia's Political Prisoners*, pp. 10–21; TAPOL, *Indonesia: The Prison State* (London: TAPOL, 1976); David Jenkins, 'Accounting for Human Errors', *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 105 (27 July 1979), pp. 35–36.

21 Kammen and Zakaria, 'Detention in Mass Violence', p. 448.

22 On the timing and numbers for when political prisoners were detained, see Fealy, *The Release of Indonesia's Political Prisoners*, pp. 44–46; Justus M. van der Kroef, 'Indonesia's Political Prisoners', *Pacific Affairs*, 49 (1976), pp. 625–647.

command posts, and so both government and civilian buildings were commandeered and used across the archipelago to house the growing number of political prisoners.

Across the country, many actors were involved in the rounding up, detention and interrogation of political prisoners. Overwhelmingly, these were men from the army, and from other branches of the defence forces. Those from the police and military police were also frequently involved, as well as civilians, most of them drawn from the various anti-PKI groups which also assisted the army in carrying out mass executions of detainees.[23] While there were some cases of localised massacres of whole families and communities thought to be 'PKI bases',[24] the majority of those killed were taken from the detainee population; in other words, those executed were first captured for their (real or perceived) support of the PKI and usually spent at least some time in detention before their deaths. Further, many in detention also died from starvation, torture, untreated illness and disease, and forced labour.[25] The network of detention centres which evolved at this time therefore played a pivotal role in the widespread and systematic abuse of communists and their supporters.[26]

3 The Separation of Spaces for Detention and Torture

When thinking about the jails where political prisoners were held, I compare them to terminals and bus stops along a route. These were the places that I stopped at: the army/military police post on Guntur Street, the military barracks near Air Mancur, the former Chinese school at Pintu Besi, the People's University (UNRA) boarding lodge on Kernolong Road

23 On the make-up of military and civilian perpetrators, see, for example, Galuh Wandita, Indria Fernida and Karen Campbell-Nelson, 'Mass Torture in 1965–66: A Continuing Legacy', in Saskia Wieringa, Jess Melvin and Annie Pohlman (eds), *The International People's Tribunal for 1965 and the Indonesian Genocide* (London: Routledge, 2019), pp. 61–64.

24 See M.R. Siregar, *Tragedi Manusia dan Kemanusiaan: Kasus Indonesia, Sebuah Holokaus yang Diterima Sesudah Perang Dunia Kedua* (The Hague: TAPOL, 1993), pp. 226–32; Roosa, *Pretext for Mass Murder*, p. 31.

25 On the abuses within detention, see Pohlman, *Women, Sexual Violence and the Indonesian Killings of 1965–66*, pp. 47–62.

26 For discussions of how this period of mass violence transformed Indonesia's polity and whether the violence should therefore be seen as either crimes against humanity or genocide (or both), see Jess Melvin and Annie Pohlman, 'A Case for Genocide: Indonesia, 1965–1966', in Katharine McGregor, Jess Melvin and Annie Pohlman (eds), *The Indonesian Genocide of 1965: Causes, Dynamics and Legacies* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), pp. 29–52; Helen Jarvis and Saskia E. Wieringa, 'The Indonesian Massacres as Genocide', in Wieringa, Melvin and Pohlman (eds), *The International People's Tribunal for 1965 and the Indonesian Genocide*, pp. 215–236.

> and the Lidikus (the place that was used for interrogations on Lapangan Banteng Street), and also the former film studio complex in Kebayoran Lama. [… My] terminal in Jakarta was Salemba prison.[27]

Pak Munadi's story of being moved from one detention centre to another, to another, is one repeated by most political prisoners. Most of those who survived recall being taken to at least a few different places within their first years of detention, often from one overcrowded facility where the detainees were starving to another. Pak Munadi recounts his experience of hunger and overcrowding in detail in his narrative. Although there is considerable variation in the experiences of those detained in different regions, and differences between rural and urban areas, the general pattern of movement from facility to facility continued into the late 1960s.

The moves to and from places of interrogation are often clearly marked in the testimonies of survivors, especially because of the violence they experienced in those places. For the majority of detainees, interrogations began within the first days and weeks of their incarceration. While prisoners continued to experience other forms of violence in detention, interrogations tended to stop after this initial period. Some were interrogated once and a very small minority not at all. Most were interrogated on multiple occasions over days or weeks, sometimes months. In almost all cases, detainees experienced torture and ill-treatment as part of the interrogations.[28] The general pattern which emerges from survivor testimonies again shows that individuals were captured, taken into detention, then interrogated multiple times at one or more places, then moved again into another detention facility.[29]

These places where detainees were interrogated and tortured are described as either a specific room or rooms within a larger detention facility, or a separate facility altogether. In this sense, interrogations happened in spaces that were, in some way, separate from spaces of detention. To illustrate this separation, I give two examples, one a police barracks in West Sumatra, the other the interrogation centre on Gandhi Street in Medan, North Sumatra.

---

27 Munadi, 'Yang Tak Terlupakan, Jakarta, 1999', *Edi Cahyono's Experience*, 1999, accessed 12 December 2018, https://vdocuments.mx/munadi-yang-tak-terlupakan.html.

28 Roosa comes to the same conclusion: see 'The Truths of Torture', p. 34.

29 The same pattern holds true for those who were released (or, on very rare occasions, escaped); if rearrested, they would again go through the cycle of multiple interrogations. One example is that of the Pak 'HB', whose transcript I examine in more detail in Annie Pohlman, 'Sexual Violence as Torture: Crimes Against Humanity during the 1965–66 Killings in Indonesia', *Journal of Genocide Research*, 19, no. 4 (2017), pp. 583–586.

Ibu Tati was arrested in her village in West Sumatra along with several of her family members in late October 1965 and taken to a local police barracks. As she recalled, 'All of my family! My mother, my younger sister, me, Pak _ [my husband], everyone went in! Imprisoned! The accommodation [detention facility …] was at the subdistrict level [….] In the village there was a place just for that. Set aside for imprisonment. It was guarded by some civilian guards as well'.[30] As she further explained, this place was a police barracks, and hundreds of suspected members of the PKI from the local area were detained there for months where they all 'went crazy (*gila*)' from the lack of food and the filthy, overcrowded conditions. Ibu Tati explained that it was a two-storey building; she and the other women and some small children were the minority and were kept in one of the downstairs rooms, separate from the men, who were held in multiple rooms also downstairs. The police and guards mainly used the rooms upstairs, where some of them slept.

Upstairs was also the room where detainees were taken one by one to be tortured. As Ibu Tati explained, each person would be 'called' and 'the lock would open on the [cell door … and that person would be] dragged upstairs to the room'. There, members of the local police would work in groups of two or three to interrogate and torture their victims. Ibu Tati recalled how each person would be tortured:

> They beat everyone, tortured everyone to confess…. [These people] were just farmers! People who didn't know anything! [… In] that room, [we] were ordered to admit to things, like the G30S [the coup], gouging out eyes. [… The police] beat us and said we'd gouged out eyes, they said that we'd [taken part in] G30S, cut off genitals, all sorts of things.[31] How would people around here know about that? 'How many times did what's-his-name, Aidit [the national leader of the PKI], come to your house?' they'd ask. We didn't even understand what Aidit meant [she laughs]. Who's Aidit? Just a picture in a book, like Sukarno. […] Of course none of this mattered. What was important was that they could blame things on those who were innocent.

Ibu Tati recalled that she and the other women in her cell could hear the screams and crying coming from the interrogation room. When the guards

30 Interview with Ibu Tati (a pseudonym) by the author and Yenny Narny, West Sumatra, September 2005.

31 The accusations correspond directly with the military's propaganda about the alleged events during the 30 September coup.

walked past the door of their cell, she explained how they would all 'go silent' in the hopes that their cell door was not going to be opened, and one of them dragged upstairs.

The police barracks which Ibu Tati described were an example of a detention facility containing a specific room set aside for interrogations. This room, she explained, was the only place where interrogations were performed, though many other forms of violence were perpetrated against the detainees in their cells and around the barracks. Ibu Tati spent some months at the police barracks before being moved on to another detention facility in town, and then to another in another town. In total, she spent thirteen years in detention.

For many of those captured in larger urban settings, interrogations often happened in separate facilities. Of the 'stops' along his route to Salemba prison, Pak Munadi mentions a handful of such facilities in Jakarta, including the Lidikus and film studio interrogation centres. One such centre was the former Chinese school on Gandhi Street in Medan. Pak S was one man who was taken to Gandhi Street and who spoke about his own and others' experiences of torture whilst held there. He described the former school as an old Dutch-style building, with two storeys, a large open centre section, and rooms along three sides, leading from corridors. There was a main centre staircase and, as was the style in some Indies buildings, below the ground floor were pools of water meant to help cool the building; some prisoners were forced to stand in these pools for days on end as a form of torture.[32] The political prisoners were kept locked in the rooms off the corridors and in the central space on both levels; all the detention spaces were severely overcrowded. The interrogation team worked in rooms on both levels at the front of the building near the road.

A member of the PKI's youth wing, Pemuda Rakyat, Pak S was arrested from his village outside Medan and taken to the Gandhi Street centre. There, he was repeatedly interrogated and tortured. He explained that the upstairs room was where the main interrogator, a man from the army who went by the name John Martin, would torture prisoners each evening for hours. He also explained that the whole building could hear the screams from the interrogation room. Once a prisoner had 'confessed', he would be taken downstairs. There Martin's 'team' would record a statement – Pak S was told to write his out on paper – and then, 'once the interrogation team was finished with you', the prisoner was moved on to another detention facility. Pak S spent more than six months at Gandhi Street before being moved to the nearby Suka Mulia prison.

32 Conversation with Pak 'S', not recorded, together with the author, Sri Lestari Wahyuningroem, Adi Rukun and his wife, Ita, and Quadi Azam, North Sumatra, 23 November 2018. From the description, it seems that the pools of water were at least chest-deep.

The Gandhi Street centre, as one of the facilities primarily used for interrogation, was one location often described in the testimonies of survivors as a place where they experienced great cruelty. Further, in many testimonies, that cruelty was often attributed to particular interrogators. Over time, individual perpetrators became infamous within this network of specialised interrogation centres. Stories of these perpetrators depict them as men creative in their methods of torture, capable of inflicting agonising violence on their victims. John Martin from the Gandhi Street centre was one such torturer, but others include those at the various Jakarta centres. In particular, interrogators who were part of investigation teams under the army's 'Kalong Operation' (Operation Bat)[33] became infamous, and the centres where they worked were spoken about with dread; as we have seen, Sudjinah talked of them as 'devil's houses'. The Kalong Operation was headed by a Major Suroso, but those on the interrogation team included a Lieutenant Bob, a man named Atjep, and another named Burhan Komalasakti. Burhan had, in fact, been a member of the PKI's central committee, but later became one of the most feared interrogators of the period. Pak Munadi, for example, explained that

> Burhan was known as a sadist even against his own friends. He never hesitated to order his men to whip a prisoner to shreds with a stingray tail, to electrocute him again and again on the floor, or to simply beat him to death. He loved his role, and would show it when he would laugh out loud when the person being tortured would moan or beg.[34]

Whether a prisoner was taken from a detention camp to an interrogation centre, or from a cell to an interrogation room, the memory of being moved into that interrogation space is frequently marked in testimonies. Ibu Tati, for example, spoke in her narrative of how the women and small children 'being kept together' in their cell was 'safer', comparing this to the terror they all felt when the door to their cell was opened. Although the cell was overcrowded and unsanitary, and the prisoners were 'dirty and unable to get clean, [… because we were] pressed up against each other', the cell seemed to offer a sense of security. The door opening meant that 'one of us' would be taken for

33 See van der Kroef, 'Indonesian Communism,' pp. 43–44. According to one former political prisoner, Tan Swie Ling, the Kalong headquarters moved from Budi Kemuliaan street, where it had been until at least December 1966, when he was taken there, to the former school at Gunung Sahari, where he was taken in 1968: see Tan Swie Ling, *G30S 1965, Perang Dingin dan Kehancuran Nasionalisme: Pemikiran Cina Jelata Korban Orba* (Depok: Komunitas Bambu, 2010), p. 21.

34 Munadi, 'Yang Tak Terlupakan', pp. 5–6.

interrogation. To be 'called' and taken from that cell meant that you were likely going to experience some form of violence. This dread was reinforced by the fact that they could 'hear the screams' from the interrogation room, and 'saw what had happened' to their fellow detainees when they were returned to the cell. Ibu Tati, as with many other survivors recalling their time in detention, contrasts the spaces of the cell and the interrogation room; the interrogation room meant being 'alone … naked and beaten' at the hands of torturers, while the cell meant some measure of safety, even if they were 'horribly all together'. Ibu Tati herself noted the terrible irony of this comparison; nowhere was ever 'truly safe' in detention. No camp was ever the place of protection or safety claimed by the military authorities.

Overall, according to the narratives of survivors, the separation of detention and interrogation spaces seems to have served a number of functions. First, the designation of spaces specifically for interrogations had logistical and functional purposes. I speculate that the soldiers and police who began these interrogations in October 1965 may have modelled them on their existing practices; procedurally within police functions, interrogations are part of investigations. The police had been a separate institution during the early years of the Indonesian state but in 1960 were formally incorporated as part of the armed forces, though they remained a civilian force. During the killings, the army subordinated the police within the military's administrative and command structure, where it remained until 2000.[35] Criminal procedure in the 1960s instructed that a suspect should be detained and then taken for a process of interrogation as part a preliminary investigation.[36] In this way, existing investigatory procedures may have served as a model for the military and police forces tasked with dealing with those being brought into detention. The semblance of procedural instruction may even have reinforced the belief by those carrying out interrogation after interrogation that they were acting in compliance with a regulatory framework, even if those interrogations had devolved into repetitive acts of torture against the hundreds or thousands who came before them.

35 See David Jensen, 'The Central Role of the Police in Networked Security in Indonesia: A Case Study of Yogyakarta', unpublished PhD diss., Australian National University, 2010, pp. 42–43.

36 Criminal procedure at the time was governed by the former Dutch colonial H.I.R (*Herziene Indonesisch Reglement*, Revised Regulation for Indonesians), Regulation concerning police work and civil and criminal procedure (1941). See Daniel S. Lev, 'The Politics of Judicial Development in Indonesia,' *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 7, no. 2 (1965), pp. 173–199.

Within this system of mimicking existing procedures, it makes further sense that these interrogations would be organised in as systematic a way as possible, especially considering the very high numbers of people being brought into detention. Logistically, therefore, it is possible to see how an almost conveyer-belt procedure could have developed very quickly to try to cope with these numbers. In some testimonies, you hear stories of men waiting in a long line to enter the interrogation room, each man moving up the queue to be tortured in turn.[37] As Roosa described it, this was a system of 'assembly-line interrogations', like a conveyer belt passing through a machine, though these were individuals moving one by one into a room where terrible violence was perpetrated against them.[38]

Second, I would also speculate that there was an instrumentalist function to these interrogation rooms and centres, as they were often purposefully used by the men running the facilities to terrorise the detainees. Some survivors have spoken explicitly of the dread that movement to an interrogation facility inspired, partly based on the terrible anticipation of what would happen. That anticipation was part of the torment deliberately inflicted upon them. Being forced to listen to, or watch, other people being tortured, and knowing that it could and would happen to them too, was purposefully used as a way to inflict fear on victims. One woman, Ibu Siti, described how she and her young child (who had been detained with her) were forced to sit in the interrogation room and watch repeated sessions of torture. The interrogators at that camp called it 'required viewing' (*'wajib menonton'*) and she explained that it was used to terrify and intimidate the detainees. Further, Ibu Siti continued, the interrogators would force her into the interrogation room every night because they knew the effect it had upon her and her child, and derived what she described as enjoyment from that knowledge.[39]

4 Conclusion: The Paradox of Mass Interrogation

In this chapter, I have focussed on the spaces of interrogation and torture, and their separation within the wider detention network. In considering the

37 In his book of sketches of life as a political prisoner, Gumelar Demokrasno draws one such line of detainees waiting to be interrogated. See A. Gumelar Demokrasno, *Dari Kalong Sampai Pulau Buru: Kisah Tapol dalam Sketsa* (Yogyakarta: Pusat Sejarah dan Etika Politik, Universitas Sanata Dharma, 2006), pp. 10–14.

38 Roosa, 'The Truths of Torture', p. 42.

39 See Haryo Sasongko, *Korupsi Sejarah dan Kisah Derita Akar Rumput* (Jakarta: Pustaka Utan Kayu, 2005), pp. 60–64.

role and function of the 'devil's houses', as Sudjinah called them, though, a central paradox emerges: if this system of interrogation and torture was so critical to justifying the camp system – and the eradication of the PKI – why demarcate interrogation from detention? From survivor testimonies and extant military orders, we know that the army created the prisoner classification system and had begun interrogating and torturing detainees en masse by mid-November 1965. Within the broader network of detention centres – which was being rapidly created in those first few months after the coup – I contend that the designation of specific spaces for interrogation developed in advance of the categorisation system in mid-November. I base this contention on the reported experiences of those arrested in October of that year, and the likelihood that the security services in charge of these arrests mimicked their regular procedures, with interrogation the main plank of investigations. If anything, the designation of interrogation spaces was an antecedent for these policies; with large numbers of people being brought into detention, the perceived need to question them for information drove a set of practices (arrest, interrogation, then classification) which developed into the systematic torture of hundreds of thousands of people. The army needed places to do this violent work, and on a very large scale. The creation of places for systematic interrogations was therefore necessary, and was needed quickly.

More than a search for information, however, was the drive to eliminate the enemy, the PKI. Roosa has shown that the army needed the interrogations, the evidence of the 'fantasy' of a dangerous (and guilty) PKI, in order to justify the destruction of the party.[40] He further explains that the army 'threw the dragnet as widely as possible, catching and torturing anyone whose name they obtained, the interrogators imagined hundreds of thousands of people to be clandestine operatives … The very lack of material evidence to confirm such assumptions became evidence of how deviously clever the enemies were in concealing their plotting'.[41]

There were, therefore, both functionalist and intentional elements in the rapid creation of this system of mass interrogation and torture.[42] From a functionalist standpoint, the army needed places where it could quickly and methodically interrogate very high numbers of people. From an intentionalist

40 Roosa, 'The Truths of Torture', p. 34.

41 Ibid., p. 43.

42 While these terms have become mostly associated with the debate that began in the 1960s in the field of Holocaust studies, I am more interested in the arguments themselves. For a discussion of the ideological-intentionalist and structural-functionalist approaches, and their arguments, see A.D. Moses, 'Structure and Agency in the Holocaust: Daniel J. Goldhagen and his Critics', *History and Theory*, 37, no. 2 (1998), pp. 194–219.

perspective, these camps were a crucial part of wiping out the PKI and its supporters; without this overriding aim, such a comprehensive and systematic eradication of the left in Indonesia would not have been possible.

To try to understand the paradox of separating interrogation and detention spaces, we need to look at the entire system of rounding up, interrogating, and classifying detainees – some of whom were then executed en masse, others categorised into the differing 'levels' of involvement – all of which were necessary to build and maintain the fantasy. While only speculative, I would argue that this mass system may have begun as a mimicry of the security services' established procedures of investigation and, through replicating the forms of those procedures, they created a self-sustaining logic (and process) that justified the eradication of enemies. The prisoners were interrogated and admitted their guilt, and this, in turn, necessitated either their direct elimination or continued incarceration. This process became so successful that it both necessitated and justified its continued expansion on a mass scale.

References

Anderson, Benedict, 'The 1965 Massacre in Indonesia and Its Legacy', *Counterpunch* (24 January 2014). https://www.counterpunch.org/2014/01/24/the-1965-massacre-in-indonesia-and-its-legacy/.

Budiardjo, Carmel, *Surviving Indonesia's Gulag* (London: Cassell, 1996).

Cribb, Robert, 'Introduction: Problems in the Historiography of the Killings in Indonesia', in Robert Cribb (ed.), *The Indonesian Killings 1965–1966: Studies from Java and Bali* (Clayton, Vic.: Centre of Southeast Asian Studies, Monash University, 1990), pp. 1–44.

Demokrasno, A. Gumelar, *Dari Kalong Sampai Pulau Buru: Kisah Tapol dalam Sketsa* (Yogyakarta: Pusat Sejarah dan Etika Politik, Universitas Sanata Dharma, 2006).

Fealy, Greg, 'The Release of Indonesia's Political Prisoners: Domestic Versus Foreign Policy, 1975–1979', Monash Asia Institute, Working Paper No. 94. (Clayton, Vic.: Monash University Press, 1995).

Hasworo, Rinto Tri, 'Penangkapan dan Pembunuhan di Jawa Tengah Setelah G-30-S', in John Roosa, Ayu Ratih and Hilmar Farid (eds), *Tahun yang Tak Pernah Berakhir: Memahami Pengalaman Korban 65* (Jakarta: ELSAM, ISSI and TRuK, 2004), pp. 25–60.

Hearman, Vannessa, *Unmarked Graves: Death and Survival in the Anti-Communist Violence in East Java, Indonesia* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2018).

Indonesia (Republic). Stockholm Embassy, *The Intolerable Tolerance: A Short Review of the Collapse of the Indonesian Communist Party and the Birth of the New Order in Indonesia* (Stockholm: Brod, 1972).

Jarvis, Helen and Saskia E. Wieringa, 'The Indonesian Massacres as Genocide', in Saskia E. Wieringa, Jess Melvin and Annie Pohlman (eds), *The International People's Tribunal for 1965 and the Indonesian Genocide* (New York: Routledge, 2019), pp. 215–236.

Jenkins, David, 'Accounting for Human Errors', *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 105 (27 July 1979), pp. 35–36.

Jensen, David, 'The Central Role of the Police in Networked Security in Indonesia: A Case Study of Yogyakarta', unpublished PhD diss., Australian National University, 2010.

Kammen, Douglas and Faizah Zakaria, 'Detention in Mass Violence: Policy and Practice in Indonesia, 1965–1968', *Critical Asian Studies*, 44, no. 3 (2012), pp. 441–66.

van der Kroef, Justus M., 'Indonesian Communism since the 1965 Coup', *Pacific Affairs*, 43, no. 1 (1970), pp. 34–60.

van der Kroef, Justus M., 'Indonesia's Political Prisoners', *Pacific Affairs*, 49 (1976), pp. 625–647.

Lev, Daniel S., 'The Politics of Judicial Development in Indonesia', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 7, no. 2 (January 1965), pp. 173–199.

'Liputuan Khusus: Pengakuan Algojo', *Tempo*, 1–7 October 2012, pp. 50–125.

Margiyono and Kurniawan Tri Yunanto, *Neraka Rezim Soeharto: Misteri Tempat Penyiksaan Orde Baru* (Jakarta: SPASI and VHRBOOK, 2007).

Melvin, Jess, *The Army and the Indonesian Genocide: Mechanics of Mass Murder* (New York: Routledge, 2018).

Melvin, Jess and Annie Pohlman, 'A Case for Genocide: Indonesia, 1965–1966', in Katharine McGregor, Jess Melvin and Annie Pohlman (eds), *The Indonesian Genocide of 1965: Causes, Dynamics and Legacies* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), pp. 29–52.

Moses, A.D. 'Structure and Agency in the Holocaust: Daniel J. Goldhagen and His Critics', *History and Theory*, 37, no. 2 (1998), pp. 194–219.

Nowark, Manfred and Elizabeth McArthur, *The United Nations Convention Against Torture: A Commentary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

Pohlman, Annie, 'Sexual Violence as Torture: Crimes Against Humanity during the 1965–66 Killings in Indonesia', *Journal of Genocide Research*, 19, no. 4 (2017), pp. 574–593.

Pohlman, Annie, *Women, Sexual Violence and the Indonesian Killings of 1965–66* (London: Routledge, 2015).

Roosa, John, *Pretext for Mass Murder: The September 30th Movement and Suharto's Coup d'Etat in Indonesia* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006).

Roosa, John, 'The Truths of Torture: Victims' Memories and State Histories in Indonesia', *Indonesia*, 85 (April 2008), pp. 31–50.

Roosa, John, Ayu Ratih and Hilmar Farid (eds), *Tahun yang Tak Pernah Berakhir: Memahami Pengalaman Korban 65, Esai-Esai Sejarah Lisan* (Jakarta: ELSAM, TRuK and ISSI, 2004).

Sasongko, Haryo, *Korupsi Sejarah dan Kisah Derita Akar Rumput* (Jakarta: Pustaka Utan Kayu, 2005).

Scarry, Elaine, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985).

Siregar, M.R., *Tragedi Manusia dan Kemanusiaan: Kasus Indonesia, Sebuah Holokaus yang Diterima Sesudah Perang Dunia Kedua* (The Hague: TAPOL, 1993).

Sudjinah, *Terempas Gelombang Pasang* (Jakarta: Pustaka Utan Kayu, 2003).

Tan, Swie Ling, *G30S 1965, Perang Dingin dan Kehancuran Nasionalisme: Pemikiran Cina Jelata Korban Orba* (Depok: Komunitas Bambu, 2010).

TAPOL, *Indonesia: The Prison State* (London: TAPOL, 1976).

Wandita, Galuh, Indria Fernida and Karen Campbell-Nelson, 'Mass Torture in 1965–66: A Continuing Legacy', in Saskia Wieringa, Jess Melvin and Annie Pohlman (eds), *The International People's Tribunal for 1965 and the Indonesian Genocide* (London: Routledge, 2019), pp. 60–79.

Wieringa, Saskia E. and Nursyahbani Katjasungkana, *Propaganda and the Genocide in Indonesia: Imagined Evil* (London: Routledge, 2019).

Winward, Mark, 'Capture from Below: Civil-Military Relations during Indonesia's Anticommunist Violence, 1965–66', *Indonesia*, 106 (October 2018), pp. 111–136.

CHAPTER 9

Vietnam's Re-Education Camps after 1975: Narratives of Detainees

Nathalie Huynh Chau Nguyen

Abstract

Vietnam's Bamboo Gulag refers to the re-education camp system that first came into operation in northern Vietnam during the Indochina War (1946–1954). Political prisoners had to undergo 'thought reform' or 're-education'. After Vietnam was reunified in 1975, the re-education camp system became an extensive network spread throughout the country. One million South Vietnamese soldiers and civil servants were interned in the gulag in 1975. An unknown number died in the camps. Based on two oral history projects conducted in Australia in 2005–2015, this chapter explores the memories and experiences of men and women who were interned in the Bamboo Gulag after 1975, and survived to become refugees and resettle in Australia. While several memoirs of internment by Vietnamese men have been published in English and in French, few women have written about their camp experience. The narratives of South Vietnamese female veterans examined here are among the few accounts by women of their experience in the gulag. Detainees reveal details of camp life including forced 'self-confessions', malnutrition, hard labour, and witnessing the deaths of other inmates.

Keywords

Re-education – Vietnam – self-confession – Bamboo Gulag – detention without trial – memoirs – female prisoners – Vietnamese refugees – political prisoners – detention camps – oral history

Vietnam's re-education camp system, also known as the 'Bamboo Gulag',[1] represents a defining phenomenon in the country's transition to a socialist state

1 Nguyen Van Canh refers to the 'Bamboo Gulag' in his study, *Vietnam Under Communism, 1975–1982* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1983), pp. 188–205. Nghia M. Vo's book on Vietnamese re-education camps is entitled *The Bamboo Gulag: Political Imprisonment in Communist Vietnam* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2006).

©

after the victory of communist North Vietnam over republican South Vietnam in 1975. Inspired by its Soviet and Chinese antecedents, the re-education camp system subjected prisoners to 'thought reform' and hard labour.[2] More than one million people out of a population of approximately twenty million in the former South were ordered to register for re-education.[3] Low-ranking civil and military personnel were released after a short period of re-education.[4] An estimated 300,000 to 400,000 others, however, including mid- to high-ranking civil and military personnel, elected officials, members of nationalist parties, members of the *Chieu Hoi* or 'Open Arms' program (consisting of more than 200,000 communists who had defected to the South Vietnamese government), religious leaders and teachers were detained for between three and twenty-one years in one hundred or more camps located throughout the country.[5] In an anti-intellectual campaign in 1976, hundreds of writers, journalists and poets were rounded up and sent to re-education camps, some for up to fifteen years. Jamieson refers, for example, to journalist Nguyen Tu who was incarcerated for thirteen years, poet Thanh Tam Tuyen, interned for five years, poet Tran Da Tu, interned for twelve years, and writer Thao Truong, interned for fifteen years.[6]

Detainees were held without trial.[7] Precise numbers of camps and of those interned are difficult to gauge, as the Vietnamese state released contradictory information about the camps and detainees.[8] While the majority of those who were interned in the gulag in the immediate aftermath of the war were released by 1987–1988, significant numbers still remained in detention into the 1990s, and new political and religious detainees were added to the labour camp

2 Nguyen, *Vietnam Under Communism*, pp. 190–204.

3 Neil L. Jamieson, *Understanding Vietnam* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), p. 363.

4 Nguyen, *Vietnam Under Communism*, p. 195.

5 Ibid., p. 190; Vo, *The Bamboo Gulag*, p. 171; Ami-Jacques Rapin, '*Chiêu hồi*: un programme de pacification de la guerre du Vietnam (1963–1973)', *Vingtième Siècle: Revue d'histoire*, No. 110 (avril-juin 2011), pp. 33–46. Robert McKelvey refers to a re-education camp prisoner who was released in 1996 after twenty-one years in the camps. Robert S. McKelvey, *A Gift of Barbed Wire: America's Allies Abandoned in South Vietnam* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2002), p. 71.

6 Jamieson, *Understanding Vietnam*, pp. 364–365. See also Olgar Dror, 'Translator's Introduction', in Nhã Ca, *Mourning Headband for Hue: An Account of the Battle for Hue, 1968*, trans. by Olga Dror (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014), xxi–xxiii.

7 Jamieson, *Understanding Vietnam*, p. 365.

8 See Nguyen, *Vietnam Under Communism*, pp. 196–205; Jacqueline Desbarats, 'Human Rights: Two Steps Forward, One Step Backward?', in Thai Quang Trung (ed.), *Vietnam Today: Assessing the New Trends* (New York: Crane Russak, 1990), pp. 54–55; and Canada: Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, *Viet Nam: 1) Information on the Massacre of Republic of Vietnam Officials in Hue Province in 1968–69; 2) Treatment of Officials of the Former Government of the Republic of Vietnam, by the Communist Authorities*, 1 August 1989, VNM 1804. https://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6acb078.html. Accessed on 6 July 2018.

system.[9] By the end of the 1990s, however, according to Human Rights Watch, such overt repression on the part of the Vietnamese government had ceased and Vietnamese authorities preferred to use less obvious means to silence dissidents.[10] Former political prisoners were placed under government surveillance and denied registration papers while dissidents were still 'subjected to house arrest, administrative detention or prison sentences'.[11]

In the preface to his memoir *Lost Years: My 1,632 Days in Vietnamese Reeducation Camps*, Tran Tri Vu writes: 'How can I describe it all, the hunger, the sickness, the despair, the desperation, when I am not a trained writer'.[12] A reserve lieutenant in the Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces who was seconded to the Ministry of Education after graduating from Thu Duc Military Academy, Tran was among the hundreds of thousands of former service personnel who were interned in re-education camps after the fall of Saigon to communist forces on 30 April 1975. He reported for re-education in Cholon on 26 June 1975 for what he believed would be seven days. He had a wife and a two-year-old daughter. Interned in six different camps until his release on 23 December 1979, he documents camp conditions, the *boi doi* (North Vietnamese soldiers)[13] and police running the camps, his fellow inmates, political indoctrination, self-criticism sessions, hard labour, malnutrition, disease, beatings and deaths of inmates, and the horrific ways in which some internees committed suicide.[14] The mental stress of being interned without trial and with no prospect of a release date proved to be too much for some prisoners. The communist cadre who was in charge of Trang Lon, the first camp Tran was sent to, told internees: 'You are here to be reeducated in order to become progressive socialists.... we shall give you the opportunity to prove your sincere repentance for your guilt and your sincere belief in the tolerant and magnanimous policy of the Revolution'.[15] Tran also records differences between camp regimes, some of which were more lenient than others, the devotion of his wife and family, and occasional acts of kindness from local inhabitants or guards.

---

9 Human Rights Watch, *Vietnam Human Rights in a Season of Transition: Law and Dissent in the Socialist Republic of Vietnam*, Vol. 7, No. 12 (August 1995). https://www.hrw.org/reports/1995/Vietnam2.htm. Accessed on 23 December 2018.

10 Human Rights Watch, 'Vietnam: The Silencing of Dissent', 1 May 2000. https://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6a86f8.html. Accessed on 5 April 2019.

11 Human Rights Watch, 'Vietnam: The Silencing of Dissent'.

12 Tran Tri Vu [pseud.], *Lost Years: My 1,632 Days in Vietnamese Reeducation Camps* (Berkeley: Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California, 1988), xiii.

13 In Tran's memoir, the word was used 'for the politicized soldier of Communist Vietnam'. Footnote by translator Nguyen Phuc [pseud.] in Tran, *Lost Years*, p. 1.

14 Tran, *Lost Years*, p. 23.

15 Ibid., pp. 14, 18.

MAP 9.1
Re-education camps in Vietnam

His detailed memoir is dedicated to his wife and daughter and 'those who will truly understand, my camp compatriots of the lost years'.[16]

The re-education system first came into operation in northern Vietnam during the Indochina War (1946–1954). Re-education camps were a means of silencing and 'reforming' political opponents of the Vietnamese communists.[17]

16 Ibid., v.

17 Nguyen, *Vietnam Under Communism*, p. 188.

Nguyen Van Canh notes that 'all political prisoners in North Vietnam had to undergo *cai tao tu tuong*, or thought reform. In official documents it was always referred to as *cai tao* ('thought reform' or 're-education') or simply as *hoc tap* ('education' or 'study')'.[18] Prisoners underwent systematic indoctrination and had to write regular 'statements of self-criticism', a process modelled on Chinese communist techniques.[19] The best-known detainee of Vietnam's gulag was dissident poet Nguyen Chi Thien (1939–2012), who first became a political prisoner in North Vietnam in 1961 under 'Re-education Act No. 49' formulated for the 'educational reform' of 'counter-revolutionary elements who continue to be culpable of acts which threaten public security'.[20] Nguyen Chi Thien was incarcerated for a total of twenty-seven years.[21] Adopted as one of six 'prisoners of conscience' by Amnesty International in 1986, he was finally released in 1991.[22] His testimony before the U.S. Congress on 8 November 1995 was a strong indictment of communist Vietnam, including the millions who died in the struggle to impose communism on the whole country and the extensive network of re-education camps which spread throughout Vietnam after 1975.[23]

Based on two oral history projects conducted in Australia between 2005 and 2015, this chapter explores the recollections of Vietnamese male and female detainees, the circumstances of their internment, and their reconstructions of their re-education camp experiences. The narratives of the South Vietnamese female veterans examined here are among the few accounts by women of their experiences in Vietnam's gulag.

1 The Bamboo Gulag after 1975

In addition to the spread of a network of re-education camps from north to south, the aftermath of the collapse of South Vietnam saw 65,000 citizens executed,[24] and one million people forcibly de-urbanised and displaced to New

18 Ibid.

19 Ibid., pp.188–189; Aminda Smith, 'Remoulding Minds in Postsocialist China: Maoist Reeducation and Twenty-first-century Subjects,' *Postcolonial Studies*, Vol. 15, No. 4 (2012), pp. 453–454.

20 Ginetta Sagan and Stephen Denney, 'Re-education in Unliberated Vietnam: Loneliness, Suffering and Death', *The Indochina Newsletter* (October-November 1982). http://www.ocf.berkeley.edu/~sdenney/Vietnam-Reeducation-Camps-1982. Accessed on 23 April 2008.

21 See Jean Libby, 'Preface', in Nguyen Chi Thien, *Hoa Lo/Hanoi Hilton Stories* (New Haven: Yale University Southeast Asia Studies, 2007), xi.

22 Ibid., xi.

23 Nguyen Chi Thien, *Hoa Lo/Hanoi Hilton Stories* (New Haven: Yale University Southeast Asia Studies, 2007), p. 273.

24 Desbarats, 'Human Rights', p. 63.

Economic Zones in regional areas.[25] The communist regime restricted free speech and movement, curtailed religious liberties, nationalised businesses and industries, collectivised agriculture and confiscated much private property.[26] Postwar Vietnam was characterised by widespread human rights violations including forced relocations, forced labour, internment without trial, and discrimination against all those associated with the former South Vietnamese government as well as ethnic Chinese and Amerasians.[27] The extent of state repression following the war led to years of destabilisation in the South, and the rupture of social and familial networks as relatives disappeared in re-education camps and in the New Economic Zones or as escapees. More than two million people left Vietnam in the two decades following the end of the war.

Former military and civil personnel registered for re-education believing the new government's assurances that they would only be away from their families for a short time. They were also misled by the fact that most non-commissioned officers and privates who reported for re-education were released after three days.[28] All teachers were also required to report for registration.[29] The process involved two stages: first, registering with the new authorities in May 1975; and second, reporting for re-education in June 1975.[30] Official communiqués instructed junior military and police officers and low-ranking intelligence cadres to bring 'enough paper, pens, clothes, mosquito nets, personal effects, food or money for use in ten days'[31] and senior military and police officers and mid- to high-ranking intelligence officers to do likewise for a month.[32] Many detainees, however, spent more than seven years in the gulag with some interned for over twenty years.[33]

Nguyen Van Canh refers to more than one hundred operational camps containing an average of 3,000 prisoners each,[34] while a more recent study

25 Ibid., p. 60.

26 Ibid., pp. 47–66; Linda Hitchcox, *Vietnamese Refugees in Southeast Asian Camps* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1990), pp. 36–68; James M. Freeman and Nguyen Dinh Huu, *Voices from the Camps: Vietnamese Children Seeking Asylum* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2003), p. 7.

27 See Nguyen Van Canh, *Vietnam Under Communism*; Desbarats, 'Human Rights', pp. 47–66; Hitchcox, *Vietnamese Refugees*, pp. 36–68.

28 Nguyen, *Vietnam Under Communism*, pp. 190–191.

29 Ibid., p. 190.

30 Ibid., pp. 189–191.

31 Saigon-Gia Dinh Military Management Communiqué of 20 June 1975. See Sagan and Denney, 'Re-education in Unliberated Vietnam'.

32 Saigon-Gia Dinh Military Management Communiqué of 11 June 1975. See Sagan and Denney, 'Re-education in Unliberated Vietnam'.

33 See McKelvey, *A Gift of Barbed Wire*, p. 71.

34 Nguyen, *Vietnam Under Communism*, pp. 198–199. Nguyen provides a map and list of prisons and re-education camps in Vietnam by province.

by Nghia Vo posits the existence of more than 1,000 camps of varying sizes in post-war Vietnam, each holding between a few hundred to more than 20,000 prisoners.[35] Tran's memoir, for example, notes that Trang Lon Camp held 22,000 prisoners in 1975.[36] One of the most notorious camps, Katum Camp, was located in Tay Ninh close to the Cambodian border, and housed 10,000 prisoners. Inmates were 'killed everyday' clearing minefields.[37] The military ran prison camps in the countryside or in remote locations while the security police ran those in cities and counties.[38] As reflected in Tran's memoir, prisoners were transferred from camp to camp throughout their period of incarceration.[39] The highest-ranking prisoners were sent to camps in northern Vietnam as punishment, as these were the furthest away from the south.[40] Conditions in the camps varied according to their location and the composition of prisoners and administrators.[41] Camps not only took in detainees at the end of the war but also continued to receive new prisoners over the next two decades. Jacqueline Desbarats noted in 1990:

> A 1987 report by the Asia Watch Committee and the Committee to Protect Journalists estimated that somewhere between 7,000 and 40,000 prisoners remained in re-education camps in Vietnam. According to Amnesty International, there are still 60,000 political prisoners held in Vietnam. The U.S. State Department puts the figure at 90,000, and some Western humanitarian groups at half a million.[42]

Camps not only held political prisoners but also escapees – in other words those who had sought unsuccessfully to escape from Vietnam as boat or land refugees after 1975 – including women and children. Vietnamese Amerasian Kien Nguyen relates that he was interned in 1981 in 'Reeducation Camp No. PK 34' after a failed escape attempt.[43] He was thirteen years old. He was neither tried nor sentenced. He did hard labour for two months before his mother was able to bribe authorities to release him. He stresses that his was 'a specific

35 Vo, *The Bamboo Gulag*, p. 60.
36 Tran, *Lost Years*, p. 23.
37 Vo, *The Bamboo Gulag*, pp. 86–88.
38 Ibid., p. 60.
39 Sagan and Denney, 'Re-education in Unliberated Vietnam'.
40 Nguyen, *Vietnam Under Communism*, pp. 200–201; Vo, *Bamboo Gulag*, p. 93.
41 Sagan and Denney, 'Re-education in Unliberated Vietnam'.
42 Desbarats, 'Human Rights', p. 55.
43 Kien Nguyen, *The Unwanted* (Sydney: Pan Macmillan, 2001), pp. 245–249.

camp for women and children'.[44] Vietnamese authorities did not have a uniform policy in relation to escapees, with those who were caught either fined if they were lucky, or imprisoned for lengths of time varying from a few weeks to more than a year after failed escape attempts.[45] Human Rights Watch stated in 1991 that

> despite the release of thousands of political prisoners in 1987 and 1988 and regular amnesties on Vietnam's National Day, Asia Watch believes that large numbers of political prisoners remain in the notorious 'reeducation' camps, subject to rigorous labor, life-threatening shortages of food and medical care, and abuses such as fettering, beating and solitary confinement.[46]

Although the re-education camp system came to a close at the end of the twentieth century, the imprisonment of dissidents is an ongoing human rights issue in twenty-first century Vietnam. Amnesty International refers to nearly one hundred prisoners of conscience in Vietnam in 2018, adding that 'this number is likely an underestimation … given the shroud of secrecy the Vietnamese authorities operate under'.[47] The six former detainees whose narratives are explored here were all interned after the fall of Saigon in 1975, and spent between fifty days and ten years in the gulag.

2 Male Detainees

Nguyen Manh Tien was born in 1948 in Kien An, northern Vietnam. His father was acting chief of Kien An province and the family was Buddhist. They joined the exodus of a million refugees who moved from the communist North to the noncommunist South when Vietnam was partitioned following the 1954 Geneva Accords. Tien joined the army as a medical cadet in 1967 in order to

44 Ibid., p. 249.

45 See W. Courtland Robinson, *Terms of Refuge: The Indochinese Exodus and The International Response* (London: Zed Books, 1998), pp. 179–180.

46 Human Rights Watch, *Human Rights Watch World Report 1990 – Vietnam*, 1 January 1991. Viewed on 23 December 2018. https://www.refworld.org/docid/467fca3723.html.

47 Amnesty International, 'Viet Nam: New Research Reveals Almost 100 Prisoners of Conscience as Crackdown on Dissent Intensifies', 4 April 2018. https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2018/04/viet-nam-new-research-reveals-almost-100-prisoners-of-conscience-as-crackdown-on-dissent-intensifies/. Accessed on 4 April 2019.

provide for himself during his medical studies. After graduation, he volunteered to join the Rangers, an elite unit in the Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces involved in high-risk missions such as long-range reconnaissance,[48] and was assigned to the 32nd Ranger Group in An Loc. Tien served on the front line for two years before becoming a prisoner of war on 29 April 1975. Released after ten days, he returned to his family in Saigon. He states that when the communists released him and his fellow soldiers, it was a propaganda coup because the released war prisoners believed that their captors were honourable and therefore had no qualms about registering for re-education. He relates:

> When they announced that ex-officers would go for ten days of reeducation, 90 to 95 percent fell into that trap. It wasn't ten days but nearly three years for me. For others it was fifteen to seventeen years. We were working in starvation conditions and the only thing we could think about was food, food, food. I saw university professors fighting each other for a piece of corn or some burnt rice. Some people managed to retain their sense of integrity and self-worth but many couldn't. I was moved a few times; at first we were in Trang Lon for about two months, then they moved us to Long Khanh, and then Bu Gia Map in Phuoc Long province. We had to clear the forest and build our own accommodation. When I was in Trang Lon – it was a big area so there were many different camps – I heard that a pharmacist who graduated at the same time as me in the Military Medical Academy, his name was Mai Gia Thuoc, he killed himself out of desperation.[49]

Nguyen Viet Huy was born to a Catholic family in northern Vietnam in 1953. His father was a sergeant in the National Army of Vietnam, and moved his young family south following partition in 1954. They settled in Saigon. The father was in the Medical Corps while Huy's brother was a paratrooper. Huy studied law at the University of Saigon and was conscripted into the armed forces in 1972. He went on to serve as a second lieutenant and platoon commander in the Regional Forces. He was captured by enemy troops on 19 April 1975, and describes his experiences, initially in a prisoner-of-war camp, and then later re-education camp:

> I was imprisoned until 1977, returned home and then went to the New Economic Zone in 1978, where I was recaptured by local communists. They

48 Michael N. Martin, 'Introduction,' in Michael N. Martin and McDonald Valentine Jr, (eds), *The Black Tigers: Elite South Vietnamese Rangers and their American Advisors* (Louisville: Harmony House Publishers, 1993), p. 13.

49 Nguyen Manh Tien, interview by author, 23 September 2013, Cabramatta, New South Wales. National Library of Australia (hereafter NLA) ORAL TRC 6525/18.

> put me in solitary confinement. The prisoner-of-war camp was very hard, and has affected my health to this day. We were forced to work hard. We did not have enough food so we just ate manioc. A lot of my friends died of diabetes as a result. I was in the camp for two years, and we had to bury one or two prisoners every day. We would bury them in shallow graves because we were kept in the jungle at the foot of mountains, and the soil was hard and rocky. A lot of the bodies would disappear, eaten by wild pigs. Twice, I was on the point of death and they carried me to the hut reserved for the dying but twice I crawled my way back out. It was cold at night and I would share the bed and a thin blanket with another prisoner and sometimes in the morning, I would wake and the guy next to me would be dead.[50]

Vu Hoai Duc was born to a Buddhist family in Thanh Hoa, northern Vietnam, in 1917. He was the son and grandson of high-ranking court officials from the city of Hue in central Vietnam. He volunteered for service in the French Army in 1939, and studied law and journalism at Montpellier University before joining the Free French Forces as a press official in 1940 and going to North Africa. Returning to Vietnam in 1943 or 1944, he left again in 1947 following political troubles before returning in 1950. He was a press officer of the Vietnamese General Staff in 1952, and was involved with the army propaganda unit from its inception until he became company commander in 1953. He served under President Ngo Dinh Diem until the 1963 coup d'état that ended with the assassination of President Diem and his brother Ngo Dinh Nhu, and was appointed commander of the Psychological Warfare College in Dalat in 1969. He was based in Dalat from 1969 to 1975. A lieutenant colonel at the end of the war, Duc registered for re-education with the new authorities, and was interned until 1986. He relates:

> According to the communist radio, all government officials and employees had to spend a maximum of one month in a re-education center. I was a group leader. Each group had ten men. We were moved from Go Cong in Russian Molotovas [trucks] from midnight to 3 o'clock in the morning. They drove us around and around so we did not know where we were going. It was a communist tactic. In fact we were taken to Xuan Loc, which was about 14 kilometres from Saigon. After three months, we received orders for another midnight move but this time we were taken to the Saigon harbour. There were 300 people there. The ship took us to Cam Ranh, and then to the north. We were let off one night, we didn't know where, maybe in Thanh Hoa province, and were taken by train to

50 Nguyen Viet Huy, interview by author, 28 June 2013, Richmond, Victoria, Australia. NLA ORAL TRC 6525/9.

> Hanoi. We were then taken further north and arrived at Nghia Lo camp. We were told: '*Bay gio cac anh la tu binh* [Now you are prisoners]'. After five months, we were transferred to a camp under the control of the police. The commander of the camp was an older colonel and had served as a *sous-officier* [non-commissioned officer] with the French forces. He told me, 'I ask you to apply discipline in the camp. If you have trouble with any communist cadres, tell me directly'. He was a good man. We were moved to a new camp north of Son La. I was able to work for a communist doctor, Doctor Thien, and clean his office. When he had to leave, he left me a certificate which said: 'Mr. Vu Hoai Duc, health not good, high blood pressure, cannot work, can only do housework'. So the camp commander had me clean the library and help a local nurse. My family came once to visit me. They thought I looked very old. They said: 'No, it's not him!' because before, I was a strong man and in good health.
>
> About the communist camps, it depended on the camp commander. If the camp commander was a good man, prisoners had good support.[51]

Tien and Huy both escaped from Vietnam as boat people in 1980 before reaching Malaysia and resettling in Australia later that year, while Duc was sponsored by his son and daughter to Australia in 1991.

3 Female Detainees

Hoa was born in Bien Hoa, southern Vietnam, in 1935. Her family was Buddhist and her parents were traders. Hoa joined the armed forces in 1953 as a practical means to earn a living, and in order to aid her family's depressed circumstances. She served for twenty-two years until 1975, working her way up from warrant officer to captain. She worked in Cong Hoa General Hospital for ten years before going to the United States for Officer Training in 1968, after which she joined the Women's Armed Forces Corps School as an instructor. She states that she worked until 28 April 1975. She relates:

> I was pregnant with my second child at the time, but I still had to go to re-education camp. They forced me to go; many pregnant women also went. ['They spared nobody' (her husband's voice)]. They spared nobody [she repeated the sentence].

51 Vu Hoai Duc, interview by author, February 14, 2003, Ashburton, Victoria, Australia. NLA ORAL TRC 6525/1.

> At first I was at Long Giao for twelve days, and then with twelve of my colleagues I was transferred to Quang Trung. They incarcerated only officers. We were required to go to class to be re-educated. We were glad because we thought that we could then go home. We hadn't the slightest idea about what we were getting into. We had to start by writing self-confessions about all that we had done, from what year to what year, and where. The day after that we had to write self-confessions again. We thought they would make us do it once or twice but they kept asking us to do it again and again, day after day. We were so scared that we kept a draft for the next time, we were afraid that if one self-confession differed from another, we would be in trouble. And this process continued on and on until the day of my release.
>
> One day they gathered all the women for a meeting, and said that whoever was in difficulties could write these down. I wrote down that my husband was in re-education, I was in re-education, and that my old and frail parents and my three-year-old child were uncared for at home. I was pregnant and delivery was very difficult for me. My first child was born by caesarean section, and doctors had told me that the second child would have to go through the same process. After reading my petition they investigated my home district. When what I had declared proved to be true they gave me fifty days, and they released me. I was still under what they call it … house surveillance.[52]

Quy was born in Kratie, Cambodia, in 1936. Her father was a civil servant, and the family moved back to Vietnam in 1945. The family was Buddhist. Quy joined the army in 1956, serving for twenty years until the fall of Saigon in 1975. She joined the military in order to better her family's social status as well as her own. An army career was an avenue to personal and social empowerment, and an effective means of protecting herself and her family. Like Hoa, she became a captain in the Women's Armed Forces Corps, serving in the General Staff and then the Medical Corps at Cong Hoa General Hospital before being sent for Officer Training in the United States, and returning to work at the Women's Armed Forces Corps School. She was interned for two and a half years in the re-education camps:

> While I was there no one knew about our release date. We were all kept in the dark. I would say that I was hoodwinked. They asked us to make

52 Hoa, phone interview by Boitran Huynh-Beattie, 12 April 2008, Sterling, Virginia. Hoa is identified by a single name for reasons of confidentiality.

> self-criticism statements and they kept on asking us to do so, I can't remember how many times. They would compare different statements, so they could detect it if we lied. I had nothing to hide so I just kept stating the truth. I was moved around four or five different camps. We went from Hoc Mon to Quang Trung and then to Long Giao. The majority of soldiers were maltreated in re-education camps, especially when management of the camps was transferred from the military to the Interior Ministry. Luckily, the manager in charge of our camp was from South Vietnam so she was quite empathetic towards us. She knew that we were all educated people who were being imprisoned for political reasons and that we were not thieves or law breakers. Consequently, we were treated with dignity and kindness. Even though we were there in large numbers, there were no problems.[53]

Yen was born in Saigon in 1945. Her father was a lawyer and the family was Buddhist. She refers to the following reasons for joining the armed forces in 1967: first, the escalation of the war; second, the influence of an attractive and inspirational female police officer; third, campaigns to recruit female personnel; and fourth, a youthful yearning for adventure and travel. She trained in the Women's Armed Forces Corps School and graduated in 1968, working as an instructor until 1975. She remembers:

> Some time in May, if my memory is correct, it was on the 15th of May that the communists ordered all officers to present themselves for re-education. According to the communiqué we were to go to the camp for ten days and we had to bring enough food and clothes for ten days. I took food and clothes for ten days but I returned only three years later.
>
> When we were first interned, we were taken past Tay Ninh and we went past the border with Kampuchea to a place called Katum or something like that, I did not know the place. They moved us only by night, so we lost our sense of direction easily. I was with a group of females and there were not many of us at first: only about a dozen or so. Then other groups of women joined ours, and we then numbered about sixty. They then transferred us back to Cu Chi, where our group merged with a group of policewomen. We stayed there for about a year, then we were transferred to a place that used to be Quang Trung Training Centre, the site of the old military barracks. We spent the remaining two years in this location. It was very hard the first few weeks because they were not sure where to incarcerate us, therefore they kept moving us from one place to another.

53 Quy, interview by Boitran Huynh-Beattie, 7 March 2007, Sydney. Quy is identified by a single name for reasons of confidentiality.

> There was no sexual harassment. I have to assert that that kind of treatment never happened to us. However, we were harassed mentally. We had to work very hard during the day and attend political indoctrination classes two or three times a week. They taught us the principles of communism, demonstrated why communism was good, showed us how they had triumphed over us, and concluded that we were parasites and traitors to the motherland. Every week, we had to write a review, we had to write down that we recognised our past mistakes and promised to make amends. We had to repeat this process week after week.
>
> It was a form of mental torture. We did it in the hope of being released because all of us wanted to return home as soon as possible. We kept writing review after review saying the same thing over and over again. We wrote that our eyes were now opened, and promised that once we were released we would do our best to build an ideal communist society. We all lied.
>
> While we were in prison, we had no idea of how things were outside the camp. They kept any news of the outside world from us.[54]

Hoa and her husband migrated to the United States under the Orderly Departure Program in 1993, Quy was sponsored by her brother to Australia in 1986, and Yen escaped from Vietnam by boat in 1981 before reaching Hong Kong, and resettling in Australia eleven months later.

4 The Narratives

'In prison, everyone waits for freedom every day, every minute of every day',[55] writes Francis Xavier Nguyen Van Thuan, coadjutor bishop of Saigon in 1975, who was arrested in August 1975 and interned in Vietnam's gulag for thirteen years, nine of them in solitary confinement. For the six former detainees whose narratives are featured here, the time spent in incarceration may have varied, as did conditions in the camps, but a number of common factors emerge.

First, all reported for re-education believing the new authorities' assurances that it would take ten days to a month at most. Hence, Tien noted that '90 to 95 percent fell into that trap',[56] and Quy remarked, 'I would say that I was hoodwinked'.[57] Hoa's statement that 'we hadn't the slightest idea about

54 Yen, phone interview by Boitran Huynh-Beattie, 13 January 2007, Adelaide. Yen is identified by a single name for reasons of confidentiality.

55 F.X. Nguyen Van Thuan, *Testimony of Hope*, trans. by Julia Mary Darrenkamp and Anne Eileen Heffernan (Boston: Pauline, 2000), p. 52.

56 Nguyen Manh Tien interview.

57 Quy, interview.

what we were getting into'[58] summarises the perceptions of former detainees. Even after twenty years of war, and reports about re-education camps in North Vietnam, Southerners found it difficult to accept that the communist authorities would deliberately mislead people about the nature of re-education and incarcerate them in prison camps without trial. As Tran's memoir says, 'It even could be said that when the *bodoi* first came to occupy the South, everybody believed we would be left in peace; nobody thought of opposing the new government, including people who had experienced communism in the North and had come to the South in 1954'.[59] Second, prisoners were provided with no information about the conditions of their release. As Hoa notes, 'no one knew about our release date. We were all kept in the dark'.[60] Third, prisoners did not stay in one camp but were transferred from one location to another. Detainees reveal the dislocating effect of these moves, and having to adjust to different camp conditions, inmates and administrators. As Duc stated, prisoners were moved at night and taken on a circuitous route to the new camp so that they would lose their sense of direction. Yen reports similar nighttime transfers of female internees. According to Ginetta Sagan and Stephen Denney, these constant moves had two purposes. One was to make it difficult for Vietnamese to find out where relatives were interned, and the other was 'to prevent prisoners from forming bonds of friendship with each other or with some of the guards'.[61]

The accounts of Tien and Huy, both of whom were junior officers at the end of the war, reveal harsh camp conditions, with Tien referring to hard labour and starvation conditions in which he witnessed 'university professors fighting each other for a piece of corn or some burnt rice'[62] and most inmates losing any sense of integrity or self-worth, and Huy remembering the death of inmates from malnutrition and disease, and having 'to bury one or two prisoners every day'.[63] Huy's camp was in a remote mountainous location, with hard and rocky soil, and prisoners' bodies would often disappear from shallow graves, 'eaten by wild pigs'.[64] Duc's account of his ten years in a series of re-education camps in both southern and northern Vietnam is the most restrained. Such restraint is unexpected as he was the only senior officer of the six, and the only one who was sent to the North. Northern camps were initially reserved for high-ranking officers, those who, in communist terminology, 'were said to have "committed

58 Hoa, interview.
59 Tran, *Lost Years*, p. 91.
60 Hoa, interview.
61 Sagan and Denney, 'Re-education in Unliberated Vietnam'.
62 Nguyen Manh Tien, interview.
63 Nguyen Viet Huy, interview.
64 Nguyen Viet Huy, interview.

serious crimes against the people" and to "owe a blood debt to the people"'.[65] Duc survived three wars, the Second World War, the Indochina War, and the Vietnam War, and the understated nature of his recollections reflects his overall life history, in which he reveals little about the violence or deaths that he witnessed. While the other two male detainees refer to punishing conditions such as hard labour, isolation and malnutrition, Duc chooses to highlight the positive aspects of his camp experiences: the decency of a camp commander, the doctor who left a certificate ensuring that he would only be assigned light duties, the 'good support' that prisoners received if the camp commander was 'a good man'.[66] Duc's narrative reflects his resilience and generally positive outlook on life. A centenarian, he still gets up early to exercise every day.

The clearest distinction between the men's and women's accounts of re-education camp experiences is the emphasis on labour for the men, and on political indoctrination and self-criticism for the women. Even Hoa, who spent the shortest time in detention among the women – fifty days as opposed to two or more years – emphasises the repeated 'self-confessions' that detainees had to write. Quy remembers that women were asked to write 'self-criticism statements'[67] and kept on being asked to do so. As for Yen, she refers to the political indoctrination classes followed by the reviews in which inmates had to recognise past mistakes as 'a form of mental torture'.[68] The women's accounts are not uniformly negative, however, with Yen stating that she did not experience sexual harassment in the camps, and Quy pointing to the positive experience of having an empathetic camp manager who was from the South and treated prisoners 'with dignity and kindness'.[69]

It is evident from these narratives that the treatment of prisoners varied from camp to camp, and depended on who was in charge of the camps, and whether the camps were administered by the military or the security police. As Vo notes, 'the treatment of prisoners varied depending upon the location of the camps, proximity of towns or populated areas, and behaviour of the staff members and wardens'.[70] Differences in recollections are also a matter of personality and generation. Among the six former detainees, Duc is the oldest, and his reticence may be due to the reluctance of members of his generation to discuss emotive issues such as grief and personal loss. The men's accounts of

65 Nguyen, *Vietnam Under Communism*, pp. 200–201. Vo notes that lower-ranking officers were subsequently also sent to these northern camps. See Vo, *The Bamboo Gulag*, p. 93.

66 Vu Hoai Duc, interview.

67 Quy, interview.

68 Yen, interview.

69 Quy, interview.

70 Vo, *The Bamboo Gulag*, p. 65.

re-education camps are also contextualised by published books and memoirs of the experiences of male detainees of the gulag. There is an understanding that there is enough knowledge of conditions in the Bamboo Gulag for the men not to need to go into exhaustive detail about their own experiences in the camps. Although they do provide specific and sometimes horrific details of their experiences of internment, these are part of larger life histories encompassing their early lives, their military service, forced migration and resettlement in another country. The women's accounts of the re-education camps, on the other hand, while also forming part of larger life histories, lack a similar context in terms of internationally available books or memoirs about women's experiences in the Vietnamese gulag. Their narratives provide greater detail about their individual experiences of indoctrination and self-criticism, and the repetitious nature of these aspects of camp life.

The memory work done by these former detainees attests to their desire to provide personal testimonies of Vietnam's Bamboo Gulag after 1975. Their narratives were gathered as part of two major oral history projects conducted in Australia on two under-researched groups in the Vietnamese community: women and veterans. Notwithstanding the differences in their recollections of the camps they were sent to, of camp life, and of camp administrators, their narratives reveal the extent of individual suffering experienced. All six had served their country in wartime. They witnessed the collapse of their army and country, and obeyed instructions from the new authorities to present themselves for re-education. They did not realise that this would entail internment in the gulag, isolation from their families, and forced labour. They did not know that they would have no recourse to law or due process. The fact that they survived the camps, and were then able to leave Vietnam, whether as boat people or through the Orderly Departure Program, in order to resettle overseas and reconstruct lives as refugees and migrants, indicates their resilience. By telling their stories, they are recording not only their personal experiences of the gulag but also the suffering of other inmates. Oral history provided the medium through which these former detainees, in Robert Perks' and Alistair Thomson's words, 'have inscribed their experiences into the historical record and offered their own interpretations of history'.[71] This history remains unacknowledged by the Vietnamese state. While a Vietnamese American charity, the Returning Casualty, was able in 2010 to exhume the remains of twelve prisoners at the former re-education camp at Lang Da, northwest of Hanoi, and send DNA

71 Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson, 'Introduction to Second Edition,' in Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson (eds), *The Oral History Reader* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2nd edn, 2006), ix.

samples for analysis,[72] no further exhumations have since taken place. The 'insufficient discussion of the past in the post-communist world', suggests Anne Applebaum, 'is not coincidental. To put it bluntly, former communists have a clear interest in concealing the past: it tarnishes them, undermines them, hurts their claims to be carrying out "reforms", even when they personally had nothing to do with past crimes'.[73] In the absence of formal acknowledgement by the Vietnamese state, the oral histories of these six narrators stand as a form of remembrance and commemoration of Vietnam's gulag.

References

Amnesty International, 'Viet Nam: New Research Reveals Almost 100 Prisoners of Conscience as Crackdown on Dissent Intensifies', 4 April 2018. https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2018/04/viet-nam-new-research-reveals-almost-100-prisoners-of-conscience-as-crackdown-on-dissent-intensifies/.

Applebaum, Anne, *Gulag: A History of the Soviet Camps* (London: Penguin, 2004).

Canada. Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, *Viet Nam: 1) Information on the Massacre of Republic of Vietnam Officials in Hue Province in 1968–69; 2) Treatment of officials of the former government of the Republic of Vietnam, by the Communist Authorities*, 1 August 1989, VNM 1804. https://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6acb078.html.

Desbarats, Jacqueline, 'Human Rights: Two Steps Forward, One Step Backward?', in Thai Quang Trung (ed.), *Vietnam Today: Assessing the New Trends* (New York: Crane Russak, 1990), pp. 47–66.

Dror, Olga. 'Translator's Introduction', in Nhã Ca, *Mourning Headband for Hue: An Account of the Battle for Hue, 1968*, trans. by Olga Dror (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014), xv-lxv.

Freeman, James M. and Nguyen Dinh Huu, *Voices from the Camps: Vietnamese Children Seeking Asylum* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2003).

Hitchcox, Linda, *Vietnamese Refugees in Southeast Asian Camps* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1990).

Human Rights Watch, 'Vietnam: The Silencing of Dissent', 1 May 2000. https://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6a86f8.html.

72 Julie Martin, 'The Returning Casualty: the Excavation of a Communist Re-education Camp Cemetery at Lang Da, Yen Bai Province, Vietnam', in W.J. Mike Groen, Nicholas Márquez-Grant and Robert C. Janaway (eds), *Forensic Archeology: A Global Perspective* (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 2015), p. 509. The Returning Casualty blog entries on the exhumations ceased after May 2011.

73 Anne Applebaum, *Gulag: A History of the Soviet Camps* (London: Penguin, 2004), p. 509.

Human Rights Watch, *Human Rights Watch World Report 1990 – Vietnam*, 1 January 1991. https://www.refworld.org/docid/467fca3723.html.

Human Rights Watch, *Vietnam Human Rights in a Season of Transition: Law and Dissent in the Socialist Republic of Vietnam*, Vol. 7, No. 12 (August 1995). https://www.hrw.org/reports/1995/Vietnam2.htm.

Jamieson, Neil L., *Understanding Vietnam* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

Libby, Jean, 'Preface', in Nguyen Chi Thien, *Hoa Lo/Hanoi Hilton Stories* (New Haven: Yale University Southeast Asia Studies, 2007), xi-xiv.

Martin, Julie, 'The Returning Casualty: the Excavation of a Communist Re-education Camp Cemetery at Lang Da, Yen Bai Province, Vietnam', in W.J. Mike Groen, Nicholas Márquez-Grant and Robert C. Janaway (eds), *Forensic Archeology: A Global Perspective* (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 2015), pp. 507–513.

Martin, Michael N., 'Introduction', in Michael N. Martin and McDonald Valentine Jr (eds), *The Black Tigers: Elite South Vietnamese Rangers and their American Advisors* (Louisville: Harmony House Publishers, 1993), pp. 13–19.

McKelvey, Robert S., *A Gift of Barbed Wire: America's Allies Abandoned in South Vietnam* (Seattle: University of Washington, Press, 2002).

Nguyen Chi Thien, *Hoa Lo/Hanoi Hilton Stories* (New Haven: Yale University Southeast Asia Studies, 2007).

Nguyen, Kien, *The Unwanted* (Sydney: Pan Macmillan, 2001).

Nguyen Van Canh, *Vietnam Under Communism, 1975–1982* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1983).

Nguyen Van Thuan, F.X. *Testimony of Hope*, trans. by Julia Mary Darrenkamp and Anne Eileen Heffernan (Boston: Pauline, 2000).

Perks, Robert and Alistair Thomson, 'Introduction to Second Edition', in Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson (eds), *The Oral History Reader* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2nd edn, 2006), ix-xiv.

Rapin, Ami-Jacques, '*Chiêu hồi*: un programme de pacification de la guerre du Vietnam (1963–1973)', *Vingtième Siècle: Revue d'histoire*, No. 110 (avril-juin 2011), pp. 33–46.

Robinson, W. Courtland, *Terms of Refuge: The Indochinese Exodus and The International Response* (London: Zed Books, 1998).

Sagan, Ginetta and Stephen Denney, 'Re-education in Unliberated Vietnam: Loneliness, Suffering and Death', *The Indochina Newsletter* (October-November 1982). http://www.ocf.berkeley.edu/~sdenney/Vietnam-Reeducation-Camps-1982.

Smith, Aminda, 'Remoulding Minds in Postsocialist China: Maoist Reeducation and Twenty-first-century Subjects', *Postcolonial Studies*, Vol. 15, No. 4 (2012), pp. 453–466.

Tran Tri Vu [pseud.], *Lost Years: My 1,632 Days in Vietnamese Reeducation Camps* (Berkeley: Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California, 1988).

Vo, Nghia M., *The Bamboo Gulag: Political Imprisonment in Communist Vietnam* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2006).

CHAPTER 10

China's Re-Education Camps in Xinjiang: Curing the Disease or Killing the Patient?

James Leibold

Abstract

Beginning in early 2017, China detained upwards of a million Muslims in extrajudicial 'transformation through education' camps in the far western region of Xinjiang. Inside these camps Uyghurs, Kazakhs and other Muslim ethnic minorities were subjected to coercive political indoctrination in order to 'cleanse' Xinjiang of the 'three evil forces' of terrorism, separatism and extremism. The camps were also designed to shore up Chinese Communist Party control over this restive borderland where the dominant Han ethnic group still comprises a demographic minority. This chapter explores the pathology and cultural logic of these mass internment camps, seeking to place them in the broader context of ideological remoulding efforts in the People's Republic of China. Like the counter-revolutionaries of old, Uyghurs and other Muslims are now naturalised as abnormal, sick and dangerous, thus requiring invasive cultural and political 'surgery' to cure their 'disease'. This radical treatment has serious and hazardous implications for Chinese society under the leadership of Chinese President Xi Jinping.

Keywords

Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region – arbitrary detention – *laojiao* – re-education camps – Chinese Muslims – Uyghurs – detention camps

In early 2017, Chinese Communist Party (CCP) authorities in the far western region of Xinjiang initiated the mass detention of Uyghur, Kazakh and other Muslim ethnic minorities without legal recourse. This campaign sought to 'cleanse' (*suqing*) the region of the 'three evil forces' of terrorism, separatism and extremism, and to shore up CCP control over this restive borderland where the politically dominant Han ethnic group still comprises a demographic minority. The Party initially adopted a targeted, non-custodial approach to 'de-extremification' before constructing hundreds of purpose-built detention camps – some large enough to house over 100,000 detainees – that are

©

surrounded by prison-like walls, barbed wire and armed watchtowers. Despite CCP claims that these camps are benign 'boarding schools' or 'vocational training centres', a range of credible evidence indicates that detainees are held in squalid, overcrowded conditions and subjected to forced indoctrination, with coercive methods (including both psychological and physical torture) employed to bend and alter the captive's thoughts and deportment.[1]

The pace and scale of the mass internment strategy in Xinjiang might be unprecedented,[2] but the methods are not. These camps are only the latest manifestation of a long history of extrajudicial detention in China and persistent efforts to culturally and physical re-engineer 'deviant' populations. They are also part of a larger global history of concentration camps, which Andrea Pitzer argues stretches back to the Spanish policy of *reducción*, where native communities were rounded up in mission compounds following Columbus' 1492 voyage to the Americas.[3] The technological, legal and bureaucratic rationalities of the modern era equipped states like Nazi Germany, Soviet Russia and Khmer Rouge Kampuchea, to name but a few, with the ability to detain civilian populations with far greater efficiency and brutality. China's 'war on terror' creates what Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben calls a state/space of exception. Chinese Muslims are viewed as aberrant and barbaric, living in a state of 'bare life' like animals, which justifies them being rounded up, penned in, and ultimately, 'domesticated' in the name of progress and safety.[4]

If we hope to understand the logic and dynamics of institutions such as these modern-day Muslim reformatories in China, we must adopt what Shue and Thornton call a comparative-historical perspective, one that is sensitive to the unstable interplay between structure and process over time, and the random variations and continual adjustments that beset the processes of governance and governmentality in China.[5] This requires us to zoom-out from the contemporary plight of Chinese Muslims in Xinjiang, so that we can appreciate the recurring patterns and unique circumstances that led to the detention

1 James Leibold, 'Spectre of Instability: China's Mass Internment strategy in Xinjiang', *China Leadership Monitor*, 59 (March 2019), http://www.prcleaders.org/leibold.

2 Adrian Zenz, 'New Evidence for China's Political Re-education Campaign in Xinjiang', *China Brief*, 18:10, 15 May 2018, https://jamestown.org/program/evidence-for-chinas-political-re-education-campaign-in-xinjiang/.

3 Andrea Pitzer, *One Long Night: A Global History of Concentration Camps* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2017).

4 Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, trans. by Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998); Giorgio Agamben, *State of Exception*, trans. by Kevin Attell (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2005).

5 Vivienne Shue and Patricia Thornton, 'Introduction', in Vivienne Shue and Patricia Thornton (eds), *To Govern China: Evolving Practices of Power* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), pp. 9–10.

of a million or more civilians (both peasant farmers and urban intellectuals) in Xinjiang concentration camps.

In this chapter, I seek to place the Xinjiang camps in the broader historical and cultural context of extrajudicial detention and ideological remoulding efforts in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR) and China more broadly. My focus is less on commonalities with other camps globally and more on the specificities of the China and Xinjiang case. It is no doubt useful to understand the Xinjiang camps as the latest (or perhaps 'final') solution to the CCP's 'national question' (*minzu wenti*), or as part of an ongoing Han colonial project.[6] I argue further that they also fit a pattern of behaviour that Robert Lifton calls 'the psychology of ideological totalism,' the pathologising of unorthodox thought and behaviour in the People's Republic of China, and the use of culturally specific and 'scientific' repertoires of 'brainwashing' (*xinao*) to mend the incorrigible through a combination of coercion and exhortation.[7] In China today, the Uyghurs and other Muslims are somaticised as abnormal, sick

MAP 10.1 People's Republic of China

6 AP, 'Chinese Mass-Indoctrination Camps in Muslim-Majority Xinjiang Evoke Cultural Revolution', *ABC News*, 18 May 2018, http://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-05-18/chinese-mass-indoctrination-camps-evoke-cultural-revolution/9773344; Rian Thum, 'The Uyghurs in Modern China', *Oxford Research Encyclopedias*, April 2018, http://asianhistory.oxfordre.com/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190277727.001.0001/acrefore-9780190277727-e-160.

7 Robert Lifton, *Thought Reform and the Psychology of Totalism: A Study of "Brainwashing" in China* (New York: Norton, 1961).

and dangerous, with re-education camps rationalised as schools or hospitals where the ill and ill-informed can be treated and enlightened.

1 Straightening Crooked Timber

'Thought work' (*sixiang gongzuo*) or 'thought reform' (*sixiang gaizao*) is foundational to Chinese political culture and emerged as the *modus operandi* of the CCP. In stark contrast to the individual rights and liberties at the heart of Western liberalism, Confucianism – and Chinese political culture more broadly – hinge on three key elements: the acceptance of social hierarchy; the belief in human malleability; and finally, the necessity of human perfectibility through cultivation. In Chinese thought, humans are not equally endowed, but rather are born with varying degrees of innate quality, or what is known as *suzhi* in Chinese, which is shaped by one's physical environment and upbringing.[8] A poor Uyghur farmer in southern Xinjiang, in other words, is situated towards the bottom of the evolutionary ladder when compared to a Han Party official in Beijing. One's environment can be polluting but also transformative, necessitating relocation to 'rehabilitative spaces' (schools, prisons, hospitals, and factories) for social transformation.

Individuals are considered pliable, but must follow the guidance of those with superior quality and knowledge, those whom Confucius called a 'superior man' and the Communists now call 'leading cadres'. Even lowly Uyghur farmers can improve their *suzhi* through education, training, physical fitness, and migration. As far back as the third century BCE, the philosopher Xunzi argued that humanity was like 'crooked timber' (*jumu*), and that an individual's character flaws needed to be scraped away or straightened out in the pursuit of social harmony. Mencius, a rival thinker, believed for his part in the innate goodness of human beings, but he too stressed the importance of self-improvement.[9] The benevolent and enlightened state has a moral obligation to shape the thought and behaviour of its subjects and recast them in its own image. This is what Chinese officials call *ganhua*, the reformation of vile character traits through acts of moral superiority: a transformative logic that is central to education, penal incarceration, and even alliance building in China today.[10]

8 Delia Lin, *Civilising Citizens in Post-Mao China: Understanding the Rhetoric of Suzhi* (London: Routledge, 2017).

9 Philip J. Ivanhoe, *Confucian Moral Self Cultivation* (Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 2nd edn, 2000), pp. 37–38.

10 Michael Dutton and Xu Zhangrun, 'A Question of Difference', in Børge Bakken (ed.), *Crime, Punishment, and Policing in China* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2005),

The CCP first experimented with a 'scientific' model of thought control during the Yan'an Rectification Campaign (1943–1944), when Mao Zedong and his supporters set about systematically detaining political opponents after taking control of the party during the Long March (1934–1935).[11] Starting with the writing of Mao and other top party leaders, cadres were encouraged to admit mistakes and shortcomings in small study groups, and through 'self-criticism' and 'exegetical bonding' arrive at a new plane of collective understanding and discourse. Any recalcitrants were 'rescued' from themselves through an intense public and private inquisition of rebuke, confession and cathartic cleansing. The results were nothing short of remarkable in Yan'an, leading to what Apter and Siach call a 'total restructuring of mind and outlook in accordance with principles and precepts laid down by Mao'.[12]

The importance of 'face', or group sociability in the Chinese context, encourages the emergence of 'group consciousness', and places enormous psychological pressure on those who dare resist.[13] In a carceral setting, including extrajudicial re-education camps, detainees are first isolated and then gradually reintegrated back into the group, with prison personnel, thug-like cell bosses and reformed prisoners serving as models of emulation and intimidation. A complex set of rehabilitative technologies are employed, including inducements (food, sleep and human contact) and punishment (deprivation, torture and ostracisation) in order to slowly break down and bend detainees to the will of the group. Over time, it is hoped, they will be reborn through an exorcising journey of shame, guilt, remorse, confession, conversion and renewal.[14] The process of self-cultivation is intentionally destructive, a celebration of 'pain and suffering' in the pursuit of human perfectibility, according to philosopher Tu Weiming.[15]

Mao viewed the masses of China as 'poor and blank', and thus especially suitable for moulding. 'On a blank sheet of paper free from any mark', he wrote in 1958, 'the freshest and most beautiful characters can be written, the freshest and most beautiful pictures can be painted'.[16] Yet any form of deviance or

---

pp. 111–114; Yinghong Cheng, *Creating the 'New Man': From Enlightenment Ideals to Socialist Realities* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2009), p. 49.

11 Cheng, *Creating the 'New Man'*, pp. 59–70.

12 David E. Apter and Tony Saich, *Revolutionary Discourse in Mao's Republic* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), p. 263.

13 Dutton and Xu, 'A Question of Difference', pp. 112–113.

14 Michael Dutton, *Policing and Punishment in China: From Patriarchy to 'the People'* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 291–322.

15 Tu Wei-ming, 'Pain and Suffering in Confucian Self-Cultivation,' *Philosophy East and West*, 34:4 (Oct. 1984), pp. 379–388.

16 Mao Zedong, *Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-tung* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1966), p. 36.

resistance was also a 'poisonous weed', in Mao's words, and 'like all ghosts and monsters, must be subjected to criticism; in no circumstance should they be allowed to spread unchecked'.[17] Here cognitive and physical rehabilitation functions like a 'moral orthopaedic,' wiping clean stains or blemishes through an intense process of group disciplining and decontamination.[18]

In frontier regions, like Xinjiang and Tibet, the *ganhua* process is culturally degrading. It requires the unlearning and discarding of 'backward' and 'low quality' habits, customs and cultural traits. *Ganhua* has been central to what Stevan Harrell has identified as the CCP's 'civilizing project' in the borderlands.[19] Education, whether forced or voluntary, is viewed as salvation from barbarism, bringing the Uyghur and Tibetan savages into the light of socialism and along the linear path to modernity. While the pace of change differs with each group, the ultimate goal is complete homogeneity under the banner of a single 'Chinese nation/race'.

There have been repeated campaigns in the People's Republic of China aimed at reforming 'aberrant' groups, from urban 'social parasites' (beggars, prostitutes, petty criminals) during the 1950s, 'rightists' during the Great Leap Forward (1958–1962), counter-revolutionaries during the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976), and Falun Gong practitioners and other 'cult' members during the Reform era (1978–).[20] During the Maoist revolution, the goal of such transformations was a 'new socialist man', while more recently the intention has been to 'standardise human behaviour' in order to literally manufacture harmony, social stability, and 'the desired social working order'.[21] Ethnic minorities like the Uyghurs are but one recalcitrant group, albeit a particularly nettlesome group due to irrational fears of 'Islamic terrorism,' and the rising tide of Islamophobia in contemporary Chinese society.[22]

---

17 Ibid., p. 19.

18 Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Vintage Books, 1977), p. 32.

19 Stevan Harrell, 'Introduction', in Stevan Harrell (ed.), *Cultural Encounters on China's Ethnic Frontiers* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 1995), pp. 3–36.

20 Aminda Smith, 'The Dilemma of Thought Reform,' *Modern China*, 39:2 (2012), pp. 203–234; Ning Wang, *Banished to the Great Northern Wilderness: Political Exile and Re-Education in Mao's China* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2017; Roderick MacFarquhar and Michael Schoenhals, *Mao's Last Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), pp. 253–272; Maria Hsia Chang, *Falun Gong: The End of Days* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012).

21 Cheng, *Creating the 'New Man'*, pp. 48–126; Hu Lianhe, 'Shenmo yang de wendingguan caishi kexue wendingguan', *Beijing Ribao*, 13 July 2010, http://news.ifeng.com/opinion/politics/detail_2010_07/13/1763456_0.shtml.

22 James Leibold, 'Creeping Islamophobia', *China Brief*, 16:10, 20 June 2016, https://jamestown.org/program/creeping-islamophobia-chinas-hui-muslims-in-the-firing-line/.

2 Re-Education Through Labour Camps

Following the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949, communist authorities constructed a vast network of prison labour camps, or *laogai* in Chinese, where convicted 'criminals' were detained and required to 'reform' through forced labour and re-education. To increase the efficiency and scope of the *ganhua* process, the CCP created a parallel, extrajudicial form of detention and educational transformation for 'minor offenders', including those who exhibited 'abnormal' thought and behaviour. Known as 're-education through labour', *laojiao* in Chinese or RTL, this 'non-criminal administrative sanction' was authorised by a 1955 Central Committee directive and ratified by the National People's Congress in 1957, where it was promoted as a more efficient method than *laogai* for dealing with internal, non-antagonistic contradictions among the people.[23] Re-education was not considered judicial punishment or the deprivation of liberty, but rather 'administrative disciplinary action'.

Local party officials and their public security organs employed re-education to detain, manage and reform 'ideological undesirables', from petty miscreants to counter-revolutionaries, outside the formal legal and penal systems. Detainees were expected to work as a part of their rehabilitation, according to the Marxist-Leninist view that labour was materially transformative and cognitively liberating. Through collective, large-scale work and study sessions, camp inmates were expected to arrive at a new collective consciousness, rendering them 'useful timber' in a socialist society. Detainees could be held for three years (with a one-year extension) without due process or legal recourse, although, in theory, those who exhibited 'good behaviour' were permitted holidays and regular family visits. That said, there are many examples of abuses within the system, with citizens subjected to arbitrary detention, ill-treatment, and even torture. Many died or were driven to suicide inside the system.

Yet there was also a great deal of variation in how *laojiao* was implemented and used by local officials.[24] Re-education is best conceived of as a fluid set of utopian processes rather than an Orwellian gulag from which there was no escape.[25] The guiding principles of RTL were 'education, transformation through persuasion, and redemption', with a dense web of individual and group disciplining processes. One re-education official in Xinjiang outlined a five-step

23 Jiang Su, 'Punishment without Trial,' *Peking University Law Journal*, 4:1 (2016), p. 48; Dutton and Xu, 'A Question of Difference', pp. 122ff; Hongda Harry Wu, *Laogai: The Chinese Gulag* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1992), pp. 81–107.

24 James Seymour and Richard Anderson, *New Ghosts Old Ghosts: Prison and Labor Reform Camps in China* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1998), p. 9; Wang, *Banished to the Great Northern Wilderness*.

25 Dutton and Xu, 'A Question of Difference', p. 106.

process. Detainees were first made to reflect on their situation through group study and collective labour; next they were encouraged to recognise their guilt and mistakes; then they were required to declare a firm break with any splinter groups or illegal religious activities; finally, they were required to publicly repent and sign a formal written guarantee not to reoffend. Inducements were used to coax the reluctant inmate along the path to redemption. And if persuasion failed, more forceful methods could be employed: 'Regarding those who are incorrigible, persist with a reactionary stance, and resist transformation', a judicial official in Xinjiang wrote in 2002, 'we must correctly employ coercive methods to carry out stern punishment'.[26]

China built over 300 *laojiao* facilities. Estimates of the number of people detained within them and subjected to RTL vary widely, from hundreds of thousands, to four million, or even twenty million people over the last sixty years.[27] The RTL camps evolved during the 1950s, only to decline during the chaos of the Cultural Revolution. They were reinvented and institutionalised during the 1980s as a tool of 'social governance' (*shehui zhili*) and 'stability maintenance' (*weiwen*).[28] The forced labour of inmates formed an important part of the system's political economy, albeit never fully subsidising the institution because detainees were still paid forty percent of an average worker's wage.[29] The purpose of *laojiao* was always ideological remoulding and social transformation rather than incarceration, and the rehabilitation of aberrant populations through work, study and disciplining.

Due to its remoteness from the Chinese heartland, Xinjiang has a long history of housing Han criminals and political exiles.[30] Under the CCP some of these individuals were mobilised into the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps (or Bingtuan, for short) during the early 1950s, and tasked with colonising and developing China's 'new frontier'. The Bingtuan also established a network of labour prisons (*laogai*) which came to house some of the most serious Han prisoners (both political and criminal) from other provinces. A parallel stream of labour re-education (*laojiao*) existed both inside the Bingtuan and at

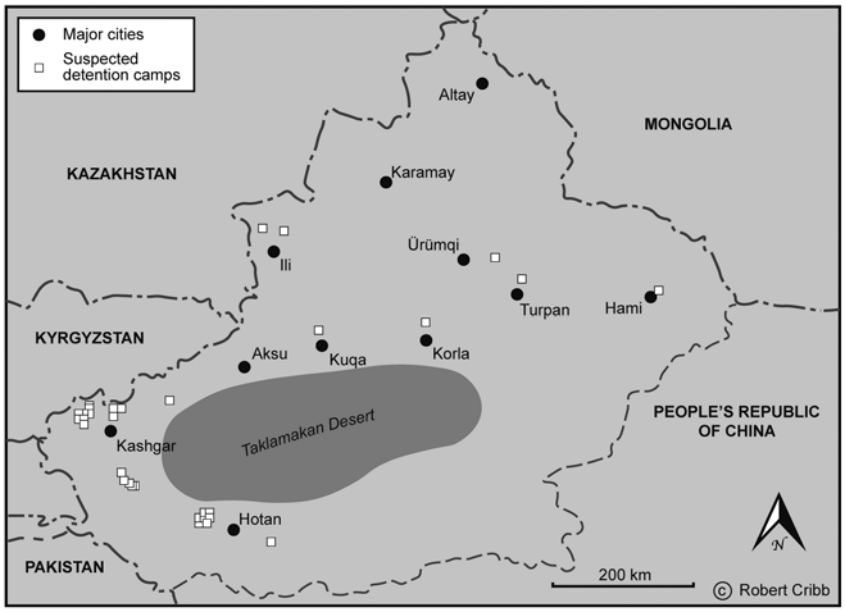
26 Yang Xueli, '"Sanlei" laojiao renyuan jiaoyu gaizao gongzuo de sikao', *Judicature of China* (2002), pp. 18–19.

27 Jiang, 'Punishment without Trial', p. 47; Stephen Noakes, 'A Disappearing Act', *Journal of Chinese Political Science*, 23 (2018), p. 200; Wu, *Laogai*, p. 18.

28 Yu Jianrong, 'From Tool of Political Struggle to Means of Social Governance,' *China Perspective*, 2 (2010), pp. 66–72.

29 Wu, *Laogai*, p. 99.

30 Seymour and Anderson, *New Ghosts Old Ghosts*, pp. 8–12; Dutton, *Policing and Punishment in China*, pp. 249–290.



MAP 10.2 Xinjiang

the regional level. The labour camps in Xinjiang were notorious for their poor conditions, corrupt management, and inhumane treatment.[31]

Yet because of its dominant focus on labour prisons, the re-education through labour system in Xinjiang was smaller than in other regions in China, and chiefly focused on local criminals and drug addicts, especially among the ethnic minority population.[32] One official Xinjiang source put the number of RTL detainees at 'more than 1000 people' across ten different centres in 2000, with a ninety percent reformation rate among the nearly 60,000 detainees since the establishment of the XUAR in 1955.[33] By the time the RTL system celebrated its fiftieth anniversary in Xinjiang in 2007, officials claimed that more than 100,000 'transgressors' had been 'successfully saved through education and persuasion'.[34]

Concentration camps, Pitzer argues, rarely succeed in addressing the concerns of their creators, ultimately proving 'as counterproductive as [they are]

31 Seymour and Anderson, *New Ghosts Old Ghosts*, pp. 44–127.
32 Ibid., p. 75.
33 Zhang Xiao, 'Xinjiang laojiao suxie', *Zhongguo sifa*, 3 (2000), p. 22.
34 Pan Congwu, 'Xinjiang jinian laojiao zhidue chuanli 50 zhounian', *Fazhi ribao*, 30 July 2007.

inhumane'.[35] In China, some prisoners (at least initially) relished the opportunity to remake themselves; yet the corrupting nature of the system led many more to resist and even openly rebel.[36] Seymour and Anderson judge rehabilitation efforts in Xinjiang to have been an abject failure, and argue they have helped to criminalise elements of the population while creating 'a subculture of resistance'.[37]

As ethnic unrest and violence increased in Xinjiang during the 1990s, the *laojiao* system was expanded and used to detain, and in theory transform, Uyghur dissidents, extremists and separatists.[38] While 'ringleaders' were charged and sentenced with 'endangering state security', many of their friends, followers and family members were either subjected to re-education or classified as 'targeted persons' or 'special groups' requiring extra surveillance.[39] Official sources reveal that in 2001 half of the RTL population in Xinjiang were accused of belonging to an illegal religious organisation or of engaging in illegal religious activities, and 85 percent were between the ages of eighteen and thirty. The camps were 'jam-packed' due to a 'sharply upward trend' in the number of people sentenced to RTL.[40] Like elsewhere in China, drug addicts and Falun gong practitioners in Xinjiang were also subjected to re-education proceedings, with Human Rights Watch estimating in 2002 that some 10,000 Falun gong practitioners were detained in *laojiao* camps across China.[41] Following the 7 July 2009 ethnic riots in the regional capital of Ürümqi, hundreds (if not thousands) of Uyghurs and other participants were subjected to RTL.[42] Seymour and Anderson found 'no meaningful incentives to reform', which resulted in a high recidivism rate. The incarceration of significant segments of the Uyghur male population ultimately backfired, with rising religiosity and violent acts of resistance in the decade after 2009.[43]

Under domestic and international pressure, the National People's Congress formally abolished the system of re-education through labour in 2013, yet

35 Pitzer, *One Long Night*, p. 16.

36 Wang, *Banished to the Great Northern Wilderness*, pp. 82–110.

37 Seymour and Anderson, *New Ghosts Old Ghosts*, pp. 94–95.

38 Gardner Bovingdon, *The Uyghurs: Strangers in their Own Land* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), pp. 105–134.

39 Fu Hualing, 'Re-Education through Labour in Historical Perspective,' *The China Quarterly*, 184 (2005), pp. 828–829.

40 Human Rights Watch, 'Dangerous Meditation', 7 Feb. 2002, pp. 49, 74, https://www.hrw.org/report/2002/02/07/dangerous-meditation/chinas-campaign-against-falungong.

41 Ibid.

42 Qin Liping, 'Shilun laojiao (xing du) gongzuo zai weihu shehui zhian tiaoling de zhongyaoxing', *Xinjiang Rectify Net*, 21 April 2011, http://www.xjjz.gov.cn/ljj_news.asp?id=7562.

43 Joanne Smith-Finley, *The Art of Symbolic Resistance* (Leiden: Brill, 2013); Rachel Harris and Aziz Isa, 'Islam by Smartphone: Reading the Uyghur Islamic Revival on WeChat', *Central Asian Survey*, 2018, pp. 61–80.

laojiao camps seem to have survived RTL's formal disbanding.[44] The arbitrary detention of deviant populations continues in China today, with officials now using so-called black jails, psychiatric facilities, detoxification centres, legal education classes, and custody and education centres to subject citizens to extrajudicial thought reform.[45] Labour, in theory, has been stripped from the process, with more focus on skills and vocational training. Yet the goal is still to reform thought and behaviour. Without any clear guidelines or legal rules, these methods encourage a more nimble, customised and socially responsive form of governance, according to Stephen Noakes, one that is more hidden and potentially more repressive.[46]

Dutton and Xu argue that the death of ideology means *ganhua* no longer functions properly and has become increasingly meaningless with the erosion of reciprocity, sincerity, and benevolence, a trend that is amplified in Xinjiang, where socialist fraternity and ethnic harmony increasingly ring hollow.[47] In fact, the absence of empathy and tolerance undermines the moral authority of the party-state and erodes its toolkit of persuasion.[48] In response, the party-state has turned to more coercive technologies of control under Xi Jinping, with renewed efforts to securitise, immobilise and ultimately domesticate its Muslim population.[49]

3 Xinjiang's New Muslim Gulags

China's formal abolition of the RTL system coincided with increasing unrest in Xinjiang.[50] A spate of violent incidents rocked Chinese society, with Uyghur militants attacking police stations, businesses and street markets in Xinjiang.

---

44 Noakes, 'A Disappearing Act', pp. 211–214.

45 Ibid., pp. 199–216: Jiang, 'Punishment without Trial', pp. 77–78; Dui Hua Foundation, 'Legal Education,' *Dui Hua Reference Materials*, 2 April 2013, https://www.duihuaresearch.org/2013/04/legal-education-arbitrary-detention.html; Amnesty International, *Changing the Soup But not the Medicine?* (London: Amnesty International Publications, 2013).

46 Noakes, 'A Disappearing Act', p. 215.

47 Dutton and Xu, 'A Question of Difference', pp. 132–133.

48 Lin, *Civilising Citizens in Post-Mao China*, p. 12.

49 Carl Minzner and Wang Yuhua, 'Rise of the Chinese Security State,' *The China Quarterly*, 222 (2015), pp. 339–359; Chen Xi, 'The Rising Cost of Stability,' *Journal of Democracy*, 24:1 (2013), pp. 57–64; Adrian Zenz and James Leibold, 'Securitizing Xinjiang: Police Recruitment, Informal Policing and Ethnic Minority Co-optation', *The China Quarterly*, (2019), https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/china-quarterly/article/securitizing-xinjiang-police-recruitment-informal-policing-and-ethnic-minority-cooptation/FEEC613414AA33A0353949F9B791E733.

50 Ben Hillman and Gray Tuttle (eds), *Ethnic Conflict and Protest in Tibet and Xinjiang: Unrest in China's West* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016).

In 2013, the violence spilled out of the XUAR, with a high-profile suicide car bombing in Beijing's Tiananmen Square and the brutal stabbing of thirty-one civilians at the Kunming train state in March 2014. The CCP blamed the violence on 'Islamic extremists', with Chinese President Xi Jinping declaring a 'people's war on terror'. He urged local officials to build 'copper ramparts and iron walls' to guard against extremism, and called on the people to 'make terrorists like rats scurrying across the street, with everyone shouting 'beat them!'[51]

Party officials were instructed to identify anyone exhibiting 'symptoms of religious extremism' or 'unusual behaviour', such as the refusal to drink alcohol or smoke in public, the wearing of Islamic face veils, or even putting a watch on one's right wrist. Identified targets were then subjected to 'transformation through education' (*jiaoyu zhuanhua*) in either group proceedings or one-on-one interventions.[52] With the appointment of Chen Quanguo as regional Party Secretary in August 2016, surveillance and securitisation increased dramatically, with Chen stressing the importance of 'placing stability ahead of everything else', and calling on security officials to adopt a more proactive, systematic, and fine-grained approach to policing abnormal behaviour and political dissent.[53]

Party authorities authorised a series of 'de-radicalisation' measures.[54] They criminalised Islamic dress, names and rituals, while circumscribing the scope of 'normal religious activity' through the closure of mosques and religious schools in Xinjiang. Passports were confiscated and those studying or working abroad were forced to return home for re-education. Uyghurs and other Muslim minorities were required to pledge their loyalty to the party and the nation at compulsory flag-raising ceremonies, while Han cadres were forced to spy on their minority 'brothers and sisters' in the name of kinship and assistance. Paranoia began to set in, with people told to 'eliminate unseen threats' and denounce 'two-faced people' who publicly comply while privately resisting. Daily life in Xinjiang is now punctuated by ubiquitous security checks, armed police patrols, anti-terror drills, and street-corner police billets.[55]

51 Xinhua, 'President Xi Vows Intense Pressure on Terrorism', *Xinhua*, 27 April 2014, http://www.china.org.cn/china/2014-04/27/content_32237203.htm.

52 James Leibold and Timothy Grose, 'Islamic Veiling in Xinjiang', *The China Journal*, 76 (2016), pp. 88–96; James Leibold, 'Surveillance in China's Xinjiang Region: Ethnic Sorting, Coercion, and Inducement', *Journal of Contemporary China*, 121 (2020), pp. 46–60.

53 Leibold, 'Spectre of Instability'; Leibold, 'Surveillance in China's Xinjiang Region', pp. 54–56.

54 Darren Byler, 'Imagining Re-Engineered Muslims in Northwest China', *Milestones*, 20 April 2017, https://www.milestonesjournal.net/photo-essays/2017/4/20/imagining-re-engineered-muslims-in-northwest-china.

55 Leibold, 'Spectre of Instability'; Leibold, 'Surveillance in China's Xinjiang Region', pp. 53–58.

For reasons that are not entirely clear, XUAR officials began a campaign of mass internment in early 2017. Expanding their control beyond a small number of 'targeted persons' and 'special groups', they began rounding up an estimated ten to thirty percent of Xinjiang's Muslim population for detention in prison-like re-education camps. On 1 April 2017, the XUAR government issued a comprehensive set of 'de-extremism regulations', which mandated that 'de-extremification must do a good job at transformation through education', and called for both individual and group remoulding methods.[56] In an effort to shore up the legality and standardisation of these re-education camps, the regulations were revised in October 2018, authorising local governments 'to establish vocational training centres and other transformation through re-education organs and management authorities in order to transform those people who have been influenced by extremism'.[57]

Re-education is no longer voluntary, but rather something one is compelled to do by local party officials without legal recourse or due process. Despite the XUAR regulations, any deprivation of liberty must be backed up by a law passed by the National People's Congress or its Standing Committee, meaning forced detention for re-education in Xinjiang violates Chinese law as well as international legal norms. Article 37 of the Chinese Constitution and Article 9 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, for example, explicitly forbid any form of arbitrary detention.[58]

As is usually the case with extrajudicial detention, there is a great deal of variation in how local officials responded to the party's call for 'de-radicalisation' and 'transformation through re-education'. Some people were sent against their will to village-based, non-custodial sessions held during the day or evening.[59] Others were subjected to 'sealed' or 'militarised management' in existing or purpose-built internment camps.[60] Adrian Zenz used government construction and procurement contracts to document the construction of nearly one

56 'Xinjiang weiwuerzu zizhiqu qujiduanhua tiaolie', *Renminwang*, 30 March 2017, http://xj.people.com.cn/n2/2017/0330/c186332-29942874.html.

57 'Xiugai Xinjiang weiwuerzu zizhiqu qujiduanhua tiaolie', *Renminwang*, 10 October 2018, https://www.guancha.cn/politics/2018_10_10_474949.shtml.

58 Sarah Biddulph, 'Arbitrary and Illegal Detention', in Sarah Biddulph and Joshua Rosenzweig (eds), *Handbook on Human Rights in China* (London: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2019), pp. 371–398.

59 RFA, 'Authorities in Xinjiang's Kashgar Detain Uyghurs at Open Political Re-education Camps,' *Radio Free Asia*, 9 May 2018, https://www.rfa.org/english/news/uyghur/camps-05092018154928.html.

60 Adrian Zenz, '"Thoroughly Reforming Them towards a Healthy Heart Attitude"', *Central Asian Survey*, 38:1 (2019), pp. 102–128.

hundred purpose-built re-education camps, many with prison-like facilities such as sealed concrete walls, barbed wire fences, watchtowers and surveillance systems. Nearly 400 detention facilities across the XUAR have now been identified.[61]

According to figures compiled by human rights groups, two million people, chiefly Uyghurs, have been subjected to re-education in Xinjiang as of June 2018, with 1.3 million people attending non-custodial re-education classes in their local villages.[62] At least 660,000 people have been removed from their families and detained in re-education camps. The United States Congressional-Executive Commission on China has called this 'the largest mass incarceration of a minority population in the world today', with Zenz revising his estimated number of detainees to 'up to 1.5 million ethnic minorities – equivalent to just under 1 in 6 adult members of a predominately Muslim minority group in Xinjiang' in March 2019.[63]

Internment quotas mean that many ordinary citizens are held indefinitely against their will, and in some cases their families are forced to pay for their detention. Inmates are required to praise the party and its leader, Xi Jinping, and denounce their own religion and culture, and their people as traitors, separatists and terrorists.[64] 'Instruction' in these camps ranges from language and vocational training to blatant political indoctrination, with the use of the same thought-control methods as the former RTL system. XUAR officials

61 Ibid. Nathan Ruser, *Documenting Xinjiang's Detention System* (Canberra: Australian Strategic Policy Institute, 2020).

62 CHRD, 'Massive Numbers of Uyghur and Other Ethnic Minorities Forced into Re-Education Programs', *Chinese Human Rights Defenders*, 3 August 2018, https://www.nchrd.org/2018/08/china-massive-numbers-of-uyghurs-other-ethnic-minorities-forced-into-re-education-programs/.

63 United States. Congressional-Executive Commission on China, 'Chairs Urge Ambassador Branstad to Prioritize Mass Detention of Uyghurs', CECC website, 3 April 2018, https://www.cecc.gov/media-center/press-releases/chairs-urge-ambassador-branstad-to-prioritize-mass-detention-of-uyghurs; Stephanie Nebehay, '1.5 million Muslims could be Detained in China's Xinjiang: Academic', *Reuters*, 14 March 2019, at https://www.reuters.com/article/us-china-xinjiang-rights/1-5-million-muslims-could-be-detained-in-chinas-xinjiang-academic-idUSKCN1QU2MQ.

64 Rian Thum, 'What Really Happens in China's "Re-Education" Camps', *The New York Times*, 15 May 2018, https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/15/opinion/china-re-education-camps.html.

talk about meticulously 'peeling back the onion' of extremism and adopting 'drip-line-style' methods of transformation through education.[65] Escapees, on the other hand, speak about indiscriminate beatings, physical and psychological torture, food deprivation, squalid conditions, and even death in custody. Detainees are forced to sing patriotic songs, such as 'Without the Chinese Communist Party, there would be no new China,' memorise party slogans, and study relevant Chinese laws and regulations.[66]

4 Conclusion: Eradicating Tumours?

Dissent has long been pathologised in the People's Republic of China, with those opposing state power viewed as sick and in need of medical attention. During the Yan'an Rectification Campaign in 1942, Mao claimed: 'our object in exposing errors and criticizing shortcomings is like that of a doctor in curing a disease'.[67] Social ills and dissatisfaction – from capitalist roaders to evil cults – are often somaticised in party-speak, with the benevolent party-state responsible for moral regulation and rehabilitation.[68]

In Xinjiang, dissent and diversity have also been criminalised. The decision to wear a headscarf, speak Uyghur or pray at a local mosque are viewed as examples of social abnormality, or even worse, as maniacal extremist behaviour. Re-education camp detainees are told they are infected with an 'ideological disease' and instructors are tasked with removing these 'malignant tumours' in order to prevent a 'plague' of religious extremism. 'If they don't study hard and cure their disease', one Xinjiang party official stated, 'we have no choice

65 Zhonggong yiningxian wei xian zhengfu, 'Shishi "sida huodong" tuijin "qujiduanhua" gongzuo', *Chinese Cadres Tribune*, April 2016, pp. 98–100.

66 Gerry Shih, 'Chinese Mass-Indoctrination Camps in Muslim Majority Xinjiang Evoke Cultural Revolution', ABC News, 18 May 2018, http://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-05-18/chinese-mass-indoctrination-camps-evoke-cultural-revolution/977334; RFA, 'Uyghur Man Buried Amid Strict Security After Latest Xinjiang Reeducation Camp', *Radio Free Asia*, 8 June 2018, https://www.rfa.org/english/news/uyghur/gulja-burial-06082018164250.html; Human Rights Watch, 'Eradiating Ideological Viruses: China's Campaign of Repression Against Xinjiang's Muslims', 9 September 2018, https://www.hrw.org/report/2018/09/09/eradicating-ideological-viruses/chinas-campaign-repression-against-xinjiangs.

67 Cited in Lifton, *Thought Reform and the Psychology of Totalism*, pp. 13–14.

68 Patricia Thornton, 'Framing dissent in Contemporary China', *The China Quarterly*, 171 (Sept. 2002), pp. 673–679; Patricia Thornton, *Disciplining the State: Virtue, Violence and State-Making in Modern China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007).

but to continue giving them medicine. When the disease is cured, they will feel it themselves, and we can also see it from their actions and behaviour'.[69]

A 2014 editorial in *Xinjiang Daily* applauded health care professionals in Aksu city for taking up the fight against religious extremism:

> Health care workers are often praised as 'human angels' for their use of scientific knowledge to repeatedly bring individuals back from the brink of death and save them, and for their use of extraordinary efforts to safeguard everyone's health and well-being … they adopt X-ray and CT-like methods to penetrate and expose the essence of extremist thought, and when they locate the contagious virus of extremist thought, they wield their shiny scalpel with surgical precision in order to dig out the inflection and kill the virus.[70]

In order to guard against possible contamination, officials in Xinjiang are encouraged to strengthen social immunity; pay close attention to regular examinations; and carry out targeted treatment.

In an effort to disarm growing public fear in Xinjiang over the disappearance of family members, the regional Communist Youth League compared transformation through education classes to 'free hospital treatment'.[71] Those deemed 'infected by an ideological illness' must seek inpatient treatment in a 're-education hospital' in order to 'cleanse the virus from their brain and restore their normal mind'. 'If religious extremist thought is not rooted out', the memo continued, 'violent terrorist acts will continually duplicate like cancer cells'.[72] Yet this diatribe also warned against false hopes: 'Having gone through re-education and recovered from an ideological disease doesn't mean that one is permanently cured'.[73] Rather, these patients must remain vigilant, and 'bolster their immune system' through further study and ideological work.

Susan McCarthy asserts that in the minds of most Han Chinese, the ethnic 'other' is situated along a horizontal axis ranging from exotic to assimilated,

---

69 RFA, 'Uyghurs in Xinjiang Re-Education Camps Forced to Express Remorse over Travel Abroad,' *Radio Free Asia*, 13 October 2017, https://www.rfa.org/english/news/uyghur/camps-10132017150431.html.

70 Pinglunyuan, 'Yongyu dandang "qujiduanhua" guangrong shiming', *Xinjiang Ribao*, 17 October 2014, http://www.chinanews.com/sh/2014/10-17/6690317.shtml.

71 Xinjiang gongqingtuan, 'Zhi jiaoyu zhuanhuaban xuexi shi dui sixiang shang huanbing qunzhong de yici mianfei zhuyuan zhiliao', *Qunzhong dajia zizhu jiefa pingtai*, 10 April 2017, https://read01.com/BL28Bk.html#.XFOZC88zY0Q.

72 Ibid.

73 Ibid.

and a vertical axis of docility to restiveness.[74] The Dai minority in Yunnan, for example, is frequently depicted as exotic and pliant, with its submissiveness feminised as alluring and erotic: a noble savage worth a voyeuristic gaze. In contrast, Mandarin-speaking Hui Muslims are viewed as largely assimilated yet potentially restive, while the Tibetans are volatile but also potentially exotic, as captured by the mysterious Potala Palace or debating monks in Lhasa.

The recent demonisation of Islam in China and across the globe complicates this schema, with Uyghurs, Kazakh and even the Hui now viewed as not docile, assimilated or exotic. Rather, the 'Muslim fanatic' is depicted as irrational, impulsive and dangerous. In short, Muslims are conceived of as bloodthirsty, subhuman madmen who must be incarcerated, treated and cured lest his disease spread and infect others. These cognitive constructs work not only to silence any resistance to majority norms and Han-centric modernity, but also to legitimise extreme repertories of control and treatment. Like Xunzi's 'crooked timber,' the Muslim must be stripped back and reshaped like others before him. 'The "three evil forces"[terrorism, separatism and extremism] are not some magical panacea for an ethnic group's strong muscles', one Uyghur party leader told his co-ethnics, 'but rather a cancerous cell which is harmful to an ethnic group's healthy development'.[75] Yet the pathologising of an entire ethnic and religious population erodes social trust and political legitimacy and cannot be conducive to the long-term health of Chinese society under President Xi Jinping. In the meantime, the CCP's mass internment strategy in Xinjiang is doing irreparable damage to the culture and lives of its Muslim populations.

References

Amnesty International, *Changing the Soup But not the Medicine?* (London: Amnesty International Publications, 2013).

Agamben, Giorgio, *Homo Sacer*, trans. by Daniel Heller-Roaze (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998).

Agamben, Giorgio, *State of Exception*, trans. by Kevin Attell (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2005).

Apter, David and Tony Saich, *Revolutionary Discourse in Mao's Republic* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994).

74 Susan McCarthy, *Communist Multiculturalism: Ethnic Revival in Southwest China* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 2009), pp. 12–13.

75 Wubulikamu Maituaong. 'Zhi weiwuerzu tongbao juexing shu', *Xinjiang Ribao*, 25 March 2017, http://news.ts.cn/content/2017-03/25/content_12572141.htm.

Biddulph, Sarah, 'Arbitrary Detention', in Sarah Biddulph and Joshua Rosenzweig (eds), *Handbook on Human Rights in China* (London: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2019), pp. 371–398.

Bovingdon, Gardner, *The Uyghurs: Strangers in their Own Land* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010).

Byler, Darren, 'Imagining Re-Engineered Muslims in Northwest China', *Milestones*, 20 April 2017, https://www.milestonesjournal.net/photo-essays/2017/4/20/imagining-re-engineered-muslims-in-northwest-china.

Chang, Maria Hsia, *Falun Gong: The End of Days* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012).

Cheng Yinghong, *Creating the 'New Man': From Enlightenment Ideals to Socialist Realities* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2009).

Dui Hua Foundation, 'Legal Education', *Dui Hua Reference Materials*, 2 April 2013, https://www.duihuaresearch.org/2013/04/legal-education-arbitrary-detention.html.

Dutton, Michael, *Policing and Punishment in China: From Patriarchy to 'the People'* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

Dutton, Michael and Xu Zhangrun, 'A Question of Difference', in Børge Bakken (ed.), *Crime, Punishment, and Policing in China* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2005), pp. 103–140.

Foucault, Michel, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Vintage Books, 1977).

Fu Hualing, 'Re-education through labour in historical perspective', *The China Quarterly*, 184, 2005, pp. 811–830.

Harrell, Stevan, 'Introduction', in Stevan Harrell (ed.), *Cultural Encounters on China's Ethnic Frontiers* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 1995), pp. 3–36.

Harris, Rachel and Aziz Isa, 'Islam by Smartphone: Reading the Uyghur Islamic Revival on WeChat', *Central Asian Survey*, 38:1 (2019), pp. 61–80.

Hillman, Ben and Gray Tuttle (eds), *Ethnic Conflict and Protest in Tibet and Xinjiang: Unrest in China's West* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016).

Hu Lianhe, 'Shenmo yang de wendingguan caishi kexue wendingguan', *Beijing Ribao*, 13 July 2010, http://news.ifeng.com/opinion/politics/detail_2010_07/13/1763456_0.shtml.

Human Rights Watch, 'Dangerous Meditation: China's Campaign against Falungong', 7 February 2002, https://www.hrw.org/report/2002/02/07/dangerous-meditation/chinas-campaign-against-falungong.

Human Rights Watch, 'Eradiating Ideological Viruses: China's Campaign of Repression Against Xinjiang's Muslims', 9 September 2018, https://www.hrw.org/report/2018/09/09/eradicating-ideological-viruses/chinas-campaign-repression-against-xinjiangs.

Jiang Su, 'Punishment without Trial', *Peking University Law Journal*, 4:1 (2016), pp. 45–78.

Ivanhoe, Philip, *Confucian Moral Self Cultivation* (Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 2nd edn, 2000).

Li Enshen, 'China Community Corrections', *Crime Law and Social Change*, 65 (2015), pp. 1–22.

Leibold, James, 'Creeping Islamophobia', *China Brief*, 16:10, 20 June 2016, https://jamestown.org/program/creeping-islamophobia-chinas-hui-muslims-in-the-firing-line/.

Leibold, James, 'Hu the Uniter', *China Brief*, 18:16, 10 October 2018, https://jamestown.org/program/hu-the-uniter-hu-lianhe-and-the-radical-turn-in-chinas-xinjiang-policy/.

Leibold, James, 'Spectre of Instability: China's Mass Internment Strategy in Xinjiang', *China Leadership Monitor*, 59 (March 2019), http://www.prcleaders.org/leibold.

Leibold, James, 'Surveillance in China's Xinjiang Region: Ethnic Sorting, Coercion and Inducement', *Journal of Contemporary China*, 121 (2020), pp. 46–60.

Leibold, James and Timothy Grose, 'Islamic Veiling in Xinjiang', *The China Journal*, 76 (2016), pp. 88–96.

Lifton, Robert, *Thought Reform and the Psychology of Totalism: A Study of "Brainwashing" in China* (New York: Norton, 1961).

Lin, Delia, *Civilising Citizens in Post-Mao China: Understanding the Rhetoric of Suzhi* (London: Routledge, 2017).

MacFarquhar, Roderick and Michael Schoenhals, *Mao's Last Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009).

Mao Zedong, *Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-tung* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1966).

McCarthy, Susan, *Communist Multiculturalism: Ethnic Revival in Southwest China* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 2009).

Nebehay, Stephanie, '1.5 million Muslims Could Be Detained in China's Xinjiang: Academic', *Reuters*, 14 March 2019, at https://www.reuters.com/article/us-china-xinjiang-rights/1–5-million-muslims-could-be-detained-in-chinas-xinjiang-academic-idUSKCN1QU2MQ.

Noakes, Stephen, 'A Disappearing Act', *Journal of Chinese Political Science*, 23 (2018), pp. 199–216.

Pan Congwu, 'Xinjiang jinian laojiao zhidue chuanli 50 zhounian', *Fazhi ribao*, 30 July 2007.

Pinglunyuan, 'Yongyu dandang "qujiduanhua" guangrong shiming', *Xinjiang Ribao*, 17 October 2014, http://www.chinanews.com/sh/2014/10–17/6690317.shtml.

Pitzer, Andrea, *One Long Night: A Global History of Concentration Camps* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2017).

Qin Liping, 'Shilun laojiao (xing du) gongzuo zai weihu shehui zhian tiaoling de zhongyaoxing', *Xinjiang Rectify Net*, 21 April 2011, http://www.xjjz.gov.cn/ljj_news.asp?id=7562.

RFA, 'Authorities in Xinjiang's Kashgar Detain Uyghurs at Open Political Re-Education Camps', *Radio Free Asia*, 9 May 2018, https://www.rfa.org/english/news/uyghur/camps-05092018154928.html.

RFA, 'Uyghurs in Xinjiang Re-Education Camps Forced to Express Remorse over Travel Abroad', *Radio Free Asia*, 13 October 2017, https://www.rfa.org/english/news/uyghur/camps-10132017150431.html.

Ruser, Nathan, *Documenting Xinjiang's Detention System* (Canberra: Australian Strategic Policy Institute, 2020).

Seymour, James and Richard Anderson, *New Ghosts Old Ghosts: Prison and Labor Reform Camps in China* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1998).

Shih, Gerry, 'Chinese Mass-Indoctrination Camps in Muslim Majority Xinjiang Evoke Cultural Revolution', *ABC News*, 18 May 2018, http://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-05-18/chinese-mass-indoctrination-camps-evoke-cultural-revolution/977334.

Shue, Vivienne and Patricia Thornton, 'Introduction', in Vivienne Shue and Patricia Thornoton (eds), *To Govern China: Evolving Practices of Power* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), pp. 1–26.

Smith, Aminda, 'The Dilemma of Thought Reform', *Modern China*, 39:2 (2012), pp. 203–234.

Smith-Finley, Joanne, *The Art of Symbolic Resistance* (Leiden: Brill, 2013).

Thornton, Patricia, *Disciplining the State: Virtue, Violence and State-Making in Modern China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007).

Thornton, Patricia, "Framing Dissent in Contemporary China', *The China Quarterly*, 171 (Sept. 2002), pp. 673–679.

Thum, Rian, 'The Uyghurs in Modern China', *Oxford Research Encyclopedias*, April 2018, http://asianhistory.oxfordre.com/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190277727.001.0001/acrefore-9780190277727-e-160.

Thum, Rian, 'What Really Happens in China's "Re-Education" Camps', *The New York Times*, 15 May 2018, https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/15/opinion/china-re-education-camps.html.

Tu Wei-ming, 'Pain and Suffering in Confucian Self-Cultivation', *Philosophy East and West*, 34:4 (Oct. 1984), pp. 379–388.

United States. Congressional-Executive Commission on China, 'Chairs Urge Ambassador Branstad to Prioritize Mass Detention of Uyghurs', *CECC website*, 3 April 2018, https://www.cecc.gov/media-center/press-releases/chairs-urge-ambassador-branstad-to-prioritize-mass-detention-of-uyghurs.

Wang, Ning, *Banished to the Great Northern Wilderness: Political Exile and Re-Education in Mao's China* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2017).

Wu, Hongda Harry, *Laogai: The Chinese Gulag* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1992).

Wubulikamu Maituaong, 'Zhi weiwuerzu tongbao juexing shu', *Xinjiang Ribao*, 25 March 2017, http://news.ts.cn/content/2017–03/25/content_12572141.htm.

Xinjiang gongqingtuan, 'Zhi jiaoyu zhuanhuaban xuexi shi dui sixiang shang huanbing qunzhong de yici mianfei zhuyuan zhiliao', *Qunzhong dajia zizhu jiefa pingtai*, 10 April 2017, https://read01.com/BL28Bk.html#.XFOZC88zY0Q.

Yang Xueli, '"Sanlei" laojiao renyuan jiaoyu gaizao gongzuo de sikao"', *Judicature of China*, 2002, pp. 18–19.

Yu Jianrong, 'From Tool of Political Struggle to Means of Social Governance', *China Perspective*, 2 (2010), pp. 66–72.

Zhang Xiao, 'Xinjiang laojiao suxie', *Zhongguo sifa*, 3 (2000): 22.

Zenz, Adrian, '"Thoroughly reforming them towards a healthy heart attitude"', *Central Asian Survey*, 38:1 (2019), pp. 102–128.

Zenz, Adrian and James Leibold, 'Securitizing Xinjiang: Police Recruitment, Informal Policing and Ethnic Minority Co-optation', *The China Quarterly* (2019), https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/china-quarterly/article/securitizing-xinjiang-police-recruitment-informal-policing-and-ethnic-minority-cooptation/FEEC613414AA33A0353949F9B791E733.

Zhonggong yiningxian wei xian zhengfu, 'Shishi "sida huodong" tuijin "qujiduanhua" gongzuo', *Chinese Cadres Tribune*, April 2016, pp. 98–100.

PART 4

Managing Camps

CHAPTER 11

Detention Camps in the Japanese Empire, 1941–1945

Sandra Wilson

Abstract

The Japanese military held very large numbers of Allied prisoners of war and civilian internees in camps throughout the Japanese empire during the conflict in the Pacific (1941–1945). Conditions in many camps were notoriously bad: prisoners of war suffered from poor living conditions, overwork, and shortages of food and medicines, and could be subject to brutal treatment by guards. Deaths in detention numbered 35,756 according to figures presented to the Tokyo War Crimes Trial. Civilian internees also suffered from lack of food and medical care, from crowded conditions and from brutality. Evidence presented at Allied war crimes trials, together with post-war memoirs by former prisoners and internees, have reinforced an image of prisoners' unrelieved suffering. In fact, however, conditions in the camps varied widely. Three key factors primarily affected the conditions of camp life: the overwhelming number of prisoners and internees and the speed with which they were captured; the policy of putting prisoners of war to work; and a perceived hardening of Japanese public attitudes to prisoners and internees.

Keywords

Japan – prisoners of war – wartime internees – Japanese military – Pacific War – war crimes – detention camps

The Japanese military held very large numbers of Allied prisoners of war (POWs) and civilian internees in camps throughout the Japanese empire during the conflict in the Pacific (1941–1945).[1] Conditions in many camps were notoriously bad: POWs suffered from poor living conditions, overwork, and shortages of food and medicines, and could be subject to brutal treatment by guards.

1 This chapter is based on research for a joint project by Sandra Wilson and Robert Cribb, funded by the Australian Research Council (DP150100906), on war crimes and the Japanese military.

©

Deaths in detention numbered 35,756 according to figures presented to the Tokyo War Crimes Trial.[2] Civilian internees also suffered from lack of food and medical care, from crowded conditions and from brutality. Evidence presented at Allied war crimes trials, together with post-war memoirs by former prisoners and internees, have reinforced an image of prisoners' unrelieved suffering.[3]

In fact, however, conditions in the camps varied widely. The differences among camps was pithily recorded in a group of brief, proforma affidavits produced by Allied prisoners released at the end of the war. According to one POW, Changi in 1942 had been 'good in all respects', while Tarsoa, on the Thailand-Burma Railway, where he had been imprisoned in 1943, had been 'V. bad in all respects'.[4] In this chapter I suggest reasons for the variations in conditions in camps cross the Japanese empire. I argue that three key factors affected the conditions of camp life: the overwhelming number of prisoners and internees and the speed with which they were captured; the policy of putting prisoners of war to work; and a perceived hardening of Japanese public attitudes to prisoners and internees.

1 Numbers of Captives

The sheer number of POWs, and the suddenness with which they were captured, had a profound impact on the conditions of subsequent captivity. Estimates of the number of prisoners taken by the Japanese military range up to 350,000.[5] Almost two-thirds of them were Asian soldiers fighting within or

2 Judgment, International Military Tribunal for the Far East, Legal Tools JU01-07-a_02, p. 1003.

3 Philip R. Piccigallo, *The Japanese on Trial: Allied War Crimes Operations in the East, 1945–1951* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1979); Sandra Wilson, Robert Cribb, Beatrice Trefalt and Dean Aszkielowicz, *Japanese War Criminals: the Politics of Justice After the Second World War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017).

4 Carter affidavit, 16 Sept. 1945, WO 325/169, The National Archives of the UK, Kew (hereafter TNA).

5 Estimates vary considerably. Utsumi Aiko gives a total of 287,535 POWs held by Japanese forces in *Kimu wa naze sabakareta no ka: Chōsenjin BC-kyū senpan no kiseki* (Tōkyō: Asahi shinbun, 2008), pp. 20–21. Her total is 350,000 in 'Prisoners of War in the Pacific War: Japan's Policy', in Gavan McCormack and Hank Nelson (eds), *The Burma-Thailand Railway: Memory and History* (St Leonards, NSW: Allen and Unwin, 1993), p. 80, n. 6. Tanaka also cites the figure of 350,000: Yuki Tanaka, *Hidden Horrors: Japanese War Crimes in World War II* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2nd edn, 2018), p. 2. The total of 132,000–140,000, given in many standard sources, originates in statistics given at the Tokyo War Crimes Trial and omits non-white prisoners (usually without noting the omission). See, for example, Joan Beaumont, 'Protecting Prisoners of War, 1939–95', in Bob Moore and Kent Fedorowich (eds), *Prisoners of War and their Captors in World War II* (Oxford: Berg, 1996), p. 280; Felicia Yap, 'Prisoners of

alongside European armies, including Filipinos, Indians, Chinese, Malays and Indonesians. Equally important was the fact that a very large proportion of the prisoners was captured in a period of just over three months, from late December 1941 to early April 1942. The Japanese authorities could not have predicted the speed and comprehensiveness of battlefield victories in this period, or the scale of the surrenders that brought them so many prisoners. The sudden pressure of numbers meant there was no time to make proper provision for prisoners, even if that had been the intention. Most basically, however, Japan did not have the resources to cope adequately with such a large number of captives. As Wakabayashi comments, 'Imperial Japan was too poor to accord its own troops and civilians "humane" treatment, much less its enemies and conquered peoples'.[6]

Some Allied soldiers were captured in the field, but the majority became prisoners as a result of three very large capitulations. Over 8,000 Allied soldiers had already been taken prisoner in Hong Kong on Christmas Day 1941,[7] but this number was dwarfed by Singapore, the Philippines and the Netherlands Indies. When Lieutenant-General A.E. Percival, commanding officer of British Commonwealth forces in Malaya, surrendered on 15 February 1942 to the Imperial Japanese Army in Singapore, 100,000 or more Allied troops became POWs. As many as 60,000 of them were Indian soldiers; the remainder were other British and Australian troops.[8] According to an official Japanese announcement, over 93,000 troops were taken prisoner on 8 March 1942 when Dutch forces under General Hein ter Poorten surrendered, and another 5,000

War and Civilian Internees of the Japanese in British Asia: the Similarities and Contrasts of Experience', *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 47, No. 2 (2012), p. 317; McCormack and Nelson (eds), *The Burma-Thailand Railway*, Appendix B, p. 164.

6 Bob Tadashi Wakabayashi, Review of Utsumi Aiko, *Nihongun no horyo seisaku*, *Social Science Japan Journal*, Vol. 10, No. 1 (2007), p. 114.

7 Charles G. Roland, *Long Night's Journey into Day: Prisoners of War in Hong Kong and Japan, 1941–1945* (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2001), p. 46.

8 Estimates of the numbers of Allied personnel taken prisoner at Singapore, and of the proportion who were Indian, vary considerably. Estimates of total Allied prisoners range from 90,000 to 130,000. See Lionel Wigmore, *The Japanese Thrust* (Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1957), pp. 379–83; Louis Allen, *Singapore 1941–1942* (London: F. Cass, 1993), pp. 175–186; Alan Warren, *Singapore 1942: Britain's Greatest Defeat* (Singapore: Talisman, 2002), pp. 301–302; Karl Hack and Kevin Blackburn, *Did Singapore Have to Fall? Churchill and the Impregnable Fortress* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004), p. 92, p. 238, n. 8; G.J. Douds, 'The Men Who Never Were: Indian POWs in the Second World War', *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*, Vol. 27, No. 2 (2004), p. 185; Tarak Barkawi, *Soldiers of Empire: Indian and British Armies in World War II* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), p. 109.

Australian, British and American personnel also surrendered.[9] The Dutch historian De Jong gives the lower figure of 69,000 for Dutch captives.[10] In April-May 1942, 110,000 or more Allied prisoners, including over 100,000 Filipinos, surrendered with U.S. Generals Edward P. King and Jonathan M. Wainwright in the Philippines.[11] In addition to these large numbers of military prisoners, about 150,000 civilians of European origin were interned. Around 130,000 of them lived in the Netherlands Indies; others were captured in China, Hong Kong, Singapore, Japan and elsewhere.[12] Some thousands of internees were later repatriated to their countries of origin in official exchanges with Allied governments, but most remained incarcerated for the duration of the conflict.[13]

From the beginning, the Japanese authorities distinguished between Western and Asian prisoners. In general they showed little interest in keeping Asian soldiers as POWs. Many Asian prisoners were simply released at an early point,[14] presumably because the military was ill-equipped to deal with such large numbers. Most Filipino, Malay, Chinese and Indonesian POWs who survived an initial period of captivity, including the Bataan Death March in the case of the Filipinos, were thus freed, though many were then persuaded or coerced into working as labourers for the Japanese military.[15] The main exception was soldiers in the British Indian Army, that is, in units that had been raised in British India. Japanese authorities hoped to persuade Indian captives to join the Japanese side, given the considerable sympathy for Japan in Indian nationalist circles. Those who agreed joined the Indian National Army as allies of

9 *Dagboek fragmenten 1940–1945* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1954), p. 156. I thank Robert Cribb for translating Dutch sources used in this chapter for me.

10 L. de Jong, *Het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden in de Tweede Wereldoorlog, 1939–1945* Volume 11a, Second Part (Leiden: Martinus Nijhoff, 1984), p. 570.

11 Louis Morton, *The Fall of the Philippines* (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 1953), pp. 27, 587.

12 Bernice Archer, *The Internment of Western Civilians Under the Japanese, 1941–1945: a Patchwork of Internment* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004), p. 5. See also L. de Jong, *The Collapse of a Colonial Society: the Dutch in Indonesia During the Second World War* (Leiden: KITLV Press, 2002). For estimated numbers of civilian internees outside the Netherlands Indies as at 1 May 1945, see 'Data on Prisoners of War Far East – Civilian Internment Camps – Far East', B G 017 07–056, Archives du Comité international de la Croix-Rouge, Geneva.

13 George E. Baxter, *Personal Experiences during the Siege of Hong Kong, December 8th–25th, 1941* (Sydney: East Asian Residents' Association, 194–); P. Scott Corbett, *Quiet Passages: the Exchange of Civilians between the United States and Japan During the Second World War* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1987); Bruce Elleman, *Japanese-American Civilian Prisoner Exchanges and Detention Camps, 1941–45* (London: Routledge, 2006).

14 Utsumi Aiko, *Nihongun no horyo seisaku* (Tōkyō: Aoki shoten, 2005), p. 199.

15 'Nanpō ni okeru furyo no shori yōryō no ken (Shōwa 17nen 5gatsu 5nichi)', Heitan sōkanbu yori Nanpōgun e tsūchō, in Hayashi Eidai (ed.), *Senji gaikokujin kyōsei renkō kankei shiryō-shū*, vol. 1 (Tōkyō: Akashi shoten, 1990), p. 46.

Japan; those who declined remained as captives.[16] Ambonese and Manadonese soldiers from the Netherlands Indies remained confined for longer than other Indonesians, as they were predominantly Christian and were considered dangerously pro-Dutch.[17] The Asians who remained prisoners of war, along with a much larger number of Western POWs and internees, were incarcerated in prison and internment camps scattered throughout the Japanese empire: in Korea, China proper, Manchuria, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Southeast Asia and in Japan itself.

The detention of high numbers of prisoners – perhaps 140,000 POWs remained after the release of most of the Asian captives – was a great strain on the resources at the command of the Japanese authorities, especially in view of the fact that they were captured so early in the war and were maintained for over three years. At home, there was already not enough to go round for Japanese civilians. Food, clothing and other essential items had been rationed in Japan since early 1941. Shortages grew worse in early 1943 and, by 1944, the average daily consumption of calories by civilians was seventeen per cent lower that at the beginning of the war, compared with a drop of two per cent in Britain and gains of one per cent in Germany and four per cent in the U.S.[18] Nor were military personnel well supplied. Logistical support for Japanese troops was always poor and was sometimes disastrous, as in Burma and New Guinea. Overall, according to Drea, 'the army's incompetence killed more Japanese soldiers than did the Allies'.[19]

Many detention camps suffered critical shortages of food, medicine and clothing, and inadequate shelter and sanitation facilities. In some cases, however, the sense of deprivation was exacerbated by the differing standards expected by Allied and Japanese soldiers. At the outset of the war with the U.S. and European powers, the Japanese government had undertaken to abide as far as possible by the 1929 Geneva Convention on the treatment of prisoners

16 On the INA see, for example, Joyce Chapman Lebra, *The Indian National Army and Japan* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2008); Fujiwara Iwaichi, trans. by Akashi Yoji, *F. Kikan: Japanese Army Intelligence Operations in Southeast Asia During World War II* (Hong Kong: Heinemann Asia, 1983); T.R. Sareen, *Japan and the Indian National Army* (New Delhi: Mounto Publishing House, 1996); Barkawi, *Soldiers of Empire*, pp. 109–117.

17 See, for example, RG496, Records of the Adjutant General, G-2 Library, Box 288 NEFIS Interrogation Reports, (U.S.) National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, MD (hereafter NARA). See also Kaori Maekawa, 'The *Heiho* during the Japanese Occupation of Indonesia', in Paul Kratoska (ed.), *Asian Labor in the Wartime Japanese Empire: Unknown Histories* (New York: Routledge, 2005), pp. 182, 183–84, 186.

18 Thomas R.H. Havens, *Valley of Darkness: the Japanese People and World War II* (New York: Norton, 1978), pp. 115, 118, 130.

19 Edward J. Drea, *Japan's Imperial Army: its Rise and Fall, 1853–1945* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2009), p. 238.

of war, even though it had not ratified the Convention.[20] Article 11 of the Convention stated that 'The food ration of prisoners of war shall be equivalent in quantity and quality to that of the depot troops'.[21] Even where food was of equivalent standard, Allied troops suffered. As a Japanese officer, graduate of an American university, told a senior American POW in the Philippines:

> You are unfortunate … in being prisoners of a country whose living standards are much lower than yours. You will often consider yourselves mistreated, while we will think of you as being treated well.[22]

The American and British communities in Japanese-occupied China viewed impending internment with alarm, partly because 'the vastly different conceptions in the standards of living of the Japanese' would make it unlikely that facilities considered suitable by Westerners would be used.[23] In Singapore and Hong Kong, civilians were interned in existing prisons – Changi and Stanley respectively. As Archer comments, for them, 'The ultimate humiliation and indignity … was their incarceration in … places normally occupied by the lowest and most outcast members of the native community'.[24] The affront to status was echoed in a comment by the Swiss Consul in Kobe about a punishment meted out to a civilian internee: 'It is only natural that grown men of white race should resent [this] treatment …'.[25]

Prisoners sometimes acknowledged that although their conditions were poor, they were the same as for Japanese troops.[26] At Omi Camp in Niigata Prefecture in Japan there had been considerable privation and a high number of deaths among the prisoners from malnutrition and overwork. The post-war assessment of the senior British officer, however, was measured: 'Taken as

---

20 Wilson, Cribb, Trefalt and Aszkielowicz, *Japanese War Criminals*, pp. 1–2.

21 Convention Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War. Geneva, 17 July 1929. Available at https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/applic/ihl/ihl.nsf/52d68d14de6160e0c12563da005fdb1b/eb1571b00daec90ec125641e00402aa6.

22 Thomas Hayes, ed. A.B. Feuer, *Bilibid Diary: the Secret Notebooks of Commander Thomas Hayes, POW the Philippines 1942–45* (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1987), entry for 8 August 1942, p. 52.

23 Suisse, Département Politique federal, Division des Intérêts étrangers to American Legation, Bern, 11 Feb. 1943, E2001–02#1000/113#247, Swiss Federal Archives, Bern (hereafter SFA).

24 Archer, *The Internment of Western Civilians Under the Japanese*, p. 57.

25 Swiss Consul, Kobe to Swiss Legation, Tokyo, 28 Sept. 1944, E2200.136–2/1969/120#23, SFA.

26 For example, Cardinal Mission, Report YV705, 'POW Camps' (dated 26 Dec. 1945), 18 Jan. 1946, p. 5, RG389, American POW Information Bureau Records Branch, General Subject File, 1942–1946, Box 2134, File: Hoten Main Camp (Hoten #1), Mukden, Manchuria (2), NARA.

a whole and appreciating the strict limitations in supplies etc. and also the normal standard of living and customs of the Japanese I would say that our general treatment in the past 18 months has been fair'. Even the punishment dealt out to prisoners was 'similar to that given to new recruits in the Nippon Army'.[27] Another inmate of the same camp declined to appear as a witness in subsequent war crimes trials on the grounds that 'it is quite impossible at this time to allot blame for loss of life and hardship among prisoners in a country as chaotic and completely beaten as Japan was after 1943'.[28]

The detention of numerous captives was a problem not only for supply of food and other material goods but also in terms of staffing of camps. The Japanese army was not large: at its peak, in 1945, its strength was 5,950,000 men, compared with 8,267,958 in the U.S. army.[29] Moreover, the Japanese army fought on many fronts. It maintained about 850,000 men in China proper at the peak of its war there,[30] as well as a large force in Manchuria. Over the course of the Asia-Pacific War the army was also spread throughout Southeast Asia and as far afield as New Guinea and Guadalcanal. POW camps were divided into a complicated system of main camps and branch camps. Some of the latter were in remote places, distant from main camps, and troops could be spread very thinly across large distances. Although work as prison guards was attractive and well paid for the Korean and Taiwanese civilian auxiliaries who were specially recruited to work as guards outside Japan,[31] it does not appear to have enjoyed high status for Japanese military personnel below the level of commanders. After the war ended, former Colonel Odajima Tadashi, who had managed POWs during the war, tried to explain why the treatment of detainees had been so bad, compared with Japan's good treatment of captured Russians in the war of 1904–1905. In his view, one factor was that the quality of camp staff had been low during the Asia-Pacific conflict, and many of those staff had been insufficiently supervised because of their location in remote branch camps.[32]

---

27 Lieutenant Stephen S. Abbott, 'Report on Conditions at No. 7 Despatch Camp – Prisoners of War – Tokio Area – Omi Japan', 20 Aug. 1945, pp. 4–5, WO311/554, TNA.

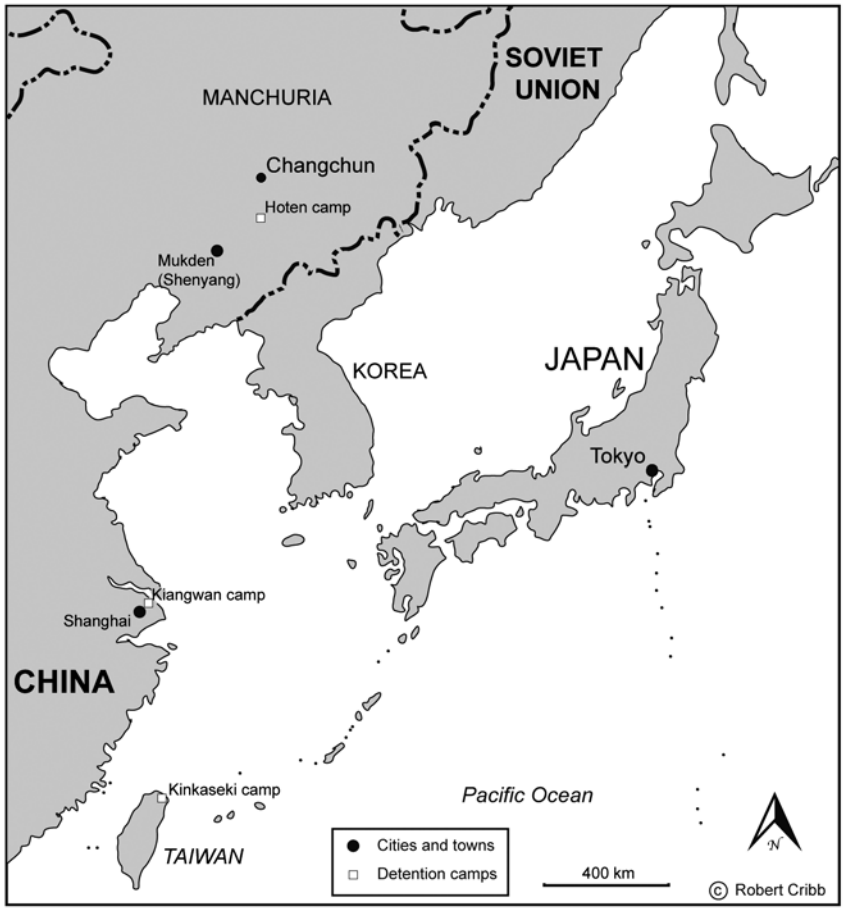
28 J.P. Burroughs to Judge Advocate General, London, 12 June 1948, WO311/554, TNA.

29 Drea, *Japan's Imperial Army*, p. 235; 'Research Starters: U.S. Military by the Numbers', The National WWII Museum, New Orleans, available at https://www.nationalww2museum.org/students-teachers/student-resources/research-starters/research-starters-us-military-numbers.

30 Drea, *Japan's Imperial Army*, p. 209.

31 Utsumi, *Kimu wa naze sabakareta no ka*, pp. 59–66; Brandon Palmer, *Fighting for the Enemy: Koreans in Japan's War, 1937–1945* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2013), p. 153.

32 'Furyo ni tsuite (Furyo jōhyōku)', no date but after 15 August 1945, in Hayashi (ed.), *Senji gaikokujin kyōsei renkō kankei shiryōshū*, vol. 1, p. 861.



MAP 11.1 Selected Japanese POW camps: East Asia

2 Putting Prisoners to Work

The official Japanese policy that POWs should work was one of the major reasons for poor conditions in detention camps, especially when combined with over-ambitious war planning and the overstretching of resources described above. The decision that prisoners would work meant that discipline would be crucial and that some groups would be situated in areas that were difficult to supply. Work was given the highest priority in many camps. As the senior British officer at Omi in Japan reported, 'From the outset the policy of the Japanese has been to send every possible man to work. Many deaths and serious illnesses such as pneumonia have been caused by this policy'.[33]

33 Abbott, 'Report on Conditions at No. 7 Despatch Camp', p. 3.

Initially there had been no specific plan to put POWs to work. When Japanese forces first captured hundreds of thousands of Allied prisoners, there was very little official policy to guide the authorities as to what to do with them. By the second half of April 1942, however, the Army Ministry had decided that white prisoners should work to increase production for the Empire.[34] Two months later, advice from Tōjō Hideki, as Minister for the Army, was passed on to newly appointed commanders of POW camps in a speech at the Army Ministry in Tokyo:

> … you must place the POW under strict discipline and not allow them to lie idle doing nothing but eating freely for even a single day. Their labour and technical skill should be fully utilized for the replenishment of production, and contribution rendered toward the prosecution of the Greater East Asiatic War, for which no effort ought to be spared.[35]

White prisoners were put to work not only because of critical labour shortages throughout the Japanese empire, but also because of a deliberate decision that they should be on display. Japanese authorities wanted Japanese and other Asian people, especially in Japan proper and its older colonies, to be given the opportunity to see that white soldiers had been humiliated by Japanese forces. Field commanders were encouraged to allow Caucasians to be seen by locals as helpless and abject captives, compelled to perform hard labour, to counter an alleged tendency among Japanese and other Asians towards 'meaningless worship of foreigners'.[36] The aim was presumably to encourage Asian people more easily to accept Japanese leadership in the Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere. In his June 1942 advice to new POW camp commanders, Tōjō instructed his audience to 'make the local populace realize the superior traits of the Japanese nation through the correct treatment of prisoners of war, impressing upon their minds the unique privilege and honour of having been born as Japanese subjects under His Majesty's gracious reign'.[37]

From mid-1942 onwards, POWs, together with some Dutch civilian men and large numbers of Asian labourers, were sent out to work projects throughout the Japanese empire. The Allied prisoners captured in Singapore in February 1942, for example, fanned out all over Southeast Asia and the Pacific. In Japan, POWs

34 Utsumi, *Nihongun no horyo seisaku*, p. 204.

35 'War Minister's Address Delivered to the Newly Appointed Chiefs of POW Camps at the Ministry of War, on June 25, 1942', RG331, SCAP Legal Section, Box 1582, Folder 10 (2), NARA.

36 Sekitan tōseikai, 'Furyo shiyō yōryō (Shōwa 17nen 11gatsu 6nichi)', in Hayashi Eidai (ed.), *Senji gaikokujin kyōsei renkō kankei shiryōshū*, vol. 4 (Tōkyō: Akashi shoten, 1991), p. 1444. See also Utsumi, 'Prisoners of War in the Pacific War', p. 73.

37 'War Minister's Address'.

were housed in camps in seven administrative areas from Hokkaido to Kyushu, and put to work at over 100 labour sites around the country.[38] Some prisoners were moved to Korea and Taiwan. Many camps were situated in or near urban areas or sizeable regional centres of population, including in Japan itself; the goal of making white prisoners visible to Asians was easy to achieve in these cases. Prisoners worked in mines and on docks and airfields, at railway sidings, in factories, iron and steel works, and warehouses, and in gardens. In the last stages of the war one group worked in and around Yokohama removing the remnants of Japanese civilian homes destroyed in the Allied bombing.[39] Often the prisoners worked alongside Japanese civilians, or had civilian overseers as well as their own guards, so they were in regular contact with people from nearby towns and villages.

Some of the Japanese military's major work projects, on the other hand, were situated in remote and inhospitable places, notably the construction of the Thailand-Burma Railway, or the building of airfields on isolated islands in the Pacific or Indian Oceans. The geography of Southeast Asia in particular is fragmented, with many natural barriers formed by mountains and rivers. For the first time in history, all of Southeast Asia had come under the political and military authority of one power – Japan – whose authorities produced relatively integrated strategic plans for the whole region. The policy that prisoners should work meant that POWs, together with imported contract labourers, could be situated in remote places doing arduous work, with little existing infrastructure and little local labour to contribute to the tasks. Discipline was severe, and overwork was common. Further, supply lines were unreliable, and food and medicine were often inadequate.

Allied POWs, Asian labourers and Japanese personnel were used to construct the Thailand-Burma Railway, which extended over 400km from Kanchanaburi in Thailand to Thanbyuzayat in Burma, with prison camps established along the line. Rapid completion of the railway was of utmost importance to Japanese planners, so that much-needed supplies of men and provisions could be delivered to battlefields in Burma, where fighting remained intense throughout the war. Prisoners worked long hours at arduous tasks in inhospitable conditions, under great pressure to finish the railway quickly. High rates of illness and shortages of food and medicine exacerbated the effects of hard labour. Sick prisoners were often made to work. About 12,000 POWs and a much larger

38 'Furyo ni tsuite (Furyo jōhōkyoku)', p. 859.

39 Gregory Boyington, *Baa Baa Black Sheep* (London: Putnam, 1958), pp. 330, 333.

number of Asian labourers died while working on the railway.[40] Arduous work, severe discipline and shortages of food and medicine also contributed to high death rates among some 2,700 Allied POWs assigned to build an airstrip for Japanese forces at Sandakan in British North Borneo in 1942–1943.[41] There were numerous other dangerous and difficult workplaces, including Kinkaseki Copper Mine in Taiwan,[42] Palembang in Sumatra, where heavy work was done in building an aerodrome,[43] Notogawa, eighty kilometres from Osaka in Japan, where prisoners worked on land reclamation,[44] and Naoetsu, in Niigata Prefecture, where prisoners worked in steel mills.[45]

In camps far from the front line and not associated with major work projects, by contrast, conditions could be considerably better. Similarly, life in internment camps in the more settled areas was not always arduous. As a general rule, conditions were better in areas that had a higher standard of living in the first place, especially Japan, Singapore, Hong Kong and the major cities of China, unless the prisoners were expected to perform heavy labour. Broadly speaking, the living standards of POWs and civilian internees reflected the conditions of life immediately outside the camps during wartime. When food and other supplies were restricted outside, camp provisions were reduced. Although all POWs suffered from poor conditions, the worst deprivation was experienced in areas that had been poor in the first place: in other words, in places where social and economic infrastructure had been least developed before the war began.

Camp life in Java in the early period of the war could be relatively comfortable. In Cimahi (Tjimahi) in May 1942, the Australian Colonel E.E. Dunlop reported that conditions were 'fairly tolerable'; a canteen was available, with

40 Among many sources see, for example, WO235/1034, esp. Files 3 and 4, TNA; WO325/157, TNA; Clifford Kinvig, *River Kwai Railway: the Story of the Burma-Siam Railroad* (London: Brassey's, 1992); Kazuo Tamayama, *Railwaymen in the War: Tales by Japanese Railway Soldiers in Burma and Thailand, 1941–1947* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

41 Richard Reid, *Laden, Fevered, Starved: the POWs of Sandakan, North Borneo, 1945* (Canberra: Commonwealth Department of Veteran Affairs, 1999); Lynette Ramsay Silver, *Sandakan: a Conspiracy of Silence* (Sydney: Sally Milner Publishing, 1998); Paul Taucher, 'Command Responsibility at the Sandakan-Ranau War Crimes Trial' (unpublished Honours Thesis, Murdoch University, 2016).

42 'Prisoners of War: Report on Camps and Conditions in Formosa', pp. 7–13, WO325/45, TNA.

43 'Report on Pankalan Balai (Sumatra) P.W. Camp', WO235/946, TNA.

44 Nicholas and Lattimer affidavits, SP459/1/573/1/418, National Archives of Australia, Sydney (hereafter NAA Sydney); Melrose and Pankhurst affidavits, SP459/1/573/1/678, NAA Sydney.

45 Alan B. Lyon, *Japanese War Crimes: Trials of the Naoetsu Camp Guards* (Loftus, NSW: Australian Military History Publications, 2000).

plenty of food at reasonable prices, and there were opportunities for recreational activities. At Bandung, too, to which Dunlop moved in June 1942, the prisoners were on good terms with the Japanese soldiers, who treated them well. The soldiers provided the prisoners with boots and blankets, and attended the prisoners' concerts. The camp boasted a jazz band and a library. There was again plenty of food, with rations including a small amount of fresh meat, and groups of prisoners were allowed out to the town to buy supplies.[46] Except for the chaotic early period following the surrender of Singapore, and a period of relative deprivation at the end of the war, Changi POW Camp was one of the best places of internment. Prisoners had a high degree of autonomy. Brutality against prisoners was rare, death rates were comparatively low and, for most of the war, food and medical supplies did not reach critically low levels.[47]

On the island of Innoshima in Japan, southeast of Hiroshima and now part of Onomichi City, one Allied prisoner commented in his diary during 1943 and early 1944 that 'the camp staff is quite a good crowd' and that 'The health of the camp is excellent'.[48] On the last day of 1944 he wrote:

> In many ways, it has been quite a good year. We number 182 souls and are as happy a body as could be found anywhere under the circumstances. We are exceedingly fortunate in our camp and work, softly [safely?] (as yet) hidden away on a small island in the middle of the Inland Sea away from large cities and industrial areas which are being bombed. Good, clean fresh air.... and a fine, clean camp.[49]

One resident of the Nanasawa Relocation Centre for civilians in Kanagawa Prefecture was able to hire a masseur and acupuncturist.[50]

A few POW camps were used specifically to house senior officers, notably Hoten #2 Camp in Hsian in Jilin Province in Manchuria, and Zentsuji in Shikoku in Japan. At the end of 1944, a group of American prisoners, including eighteen generals, was transferred from Taiwan to the Hsian Camp. They were joined by British and Dutch generals from other camps. The senior officers

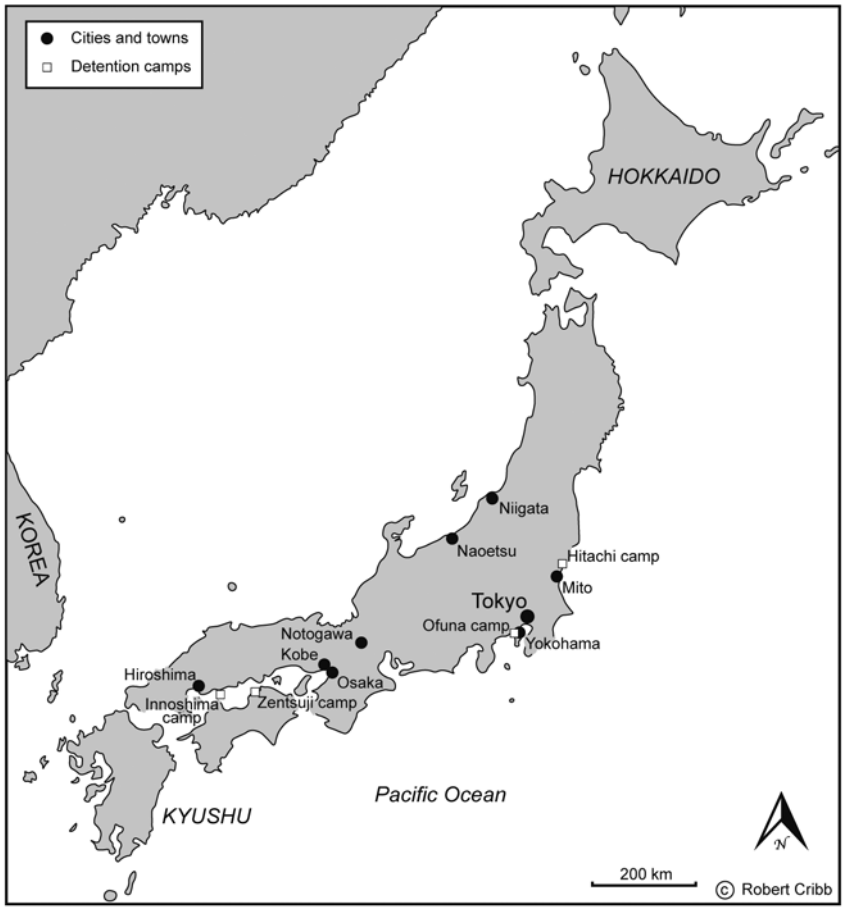
46 E.E. Dunlop, *The War Diaries of Weary Dunlop: Java and the Burma-Thailand Railway 1942–1945* (Ringwood, Vic.: Penguin, 1990), pp. 40–41, 49–70.

47 R.P.W. Havers, *Reassessing the Japanese Prisoner of War Experience: the Changi POW Camp, Singapore, 1942–45* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003).

48 Millington Diary, Imperial War Museum, London (hereafter IWM), Private Papers, Doc. 20782, entry for 24 Jan. 1943, p. 44; 1 Jan. 1944, p. 60.

49 Ibid., entry for 31 Dec. 1944, p. 78.

50 'Report on the Nanasawa Relocation Center. Visit of the 30th October 1944 by J. Kern (individual questions)', 13 Nov. 1944, p. 4, E2200.136–02#1969/120#18, SFA.



MAP 11.2 Selected POW camps in Japan

included Lieutenant-General Wainwright and Major-General King, who had led the surrenders in the Philippines, and Lieutenant-General Percival, who had surrendered at Singapore. Reports of the camp differed but conditions appear generally to have been better than in other camps.[51] At the Hsian Camp there was some heating. Senior officers were housed separately from other prisoners and each had a private room; the prisoners had access to a good library.[52]

51 See reports by Jacobs, Rogers and Gillespie, RG389, American POW Information Bureau Records Branch, General Subject File, 1942–1946, Box 2134, File: Hoten Main Camp (Hoten #1), Mukden, Manchuria (2), NARA.

52 Cardinal Mission, Report YV705, 'POW Camps', p. 5; Maj.-Gen. E.P. King to David R. Porter, no date, RG389, American POW Information Bureau Records Branch, General Subject File, 1942–1946, Box 2134, File: Hoten Main Camp (Hoten #1), Mukden, Manchuria (1),

The camp at Zentsuji, the first of the Japanese POW camps,[53] was gradually converted into a 'model camp' for officers, while enlisted men were transferred elsewhere. Though accommodation for the officers was crowded, the prisoners were well treated and there were evidently no serious beatings. Prisoners had access to Red Cross supplies and a good library, which apparently contained 3,000 volumes by the end of the war. Weekly concerts and plays were staged.[54]

3 Heightened Emotional Atmosphere

When former Colonel Odajima Tadashi tried to explain why the Japanese treatment of Allied POWs had been so much harsher in the Asia-Pacific War than in the Russo-Japanese War four decades earlier, he cited the circumstances of the conflict and the hardening of popular feeling in Japan against POWs.[55] The Asia-Pacific War was a bitter conflict, fought on all sides, as Dower has pointed out, 'without mercy'.[56] Especially in the case of prison camps in Japan, public opinion at times appears effectively to have encouraged the authorities and camp staff to deal sternly with Allied captives.

As we have seen, Allied prisoners were visible to local populations both in Japan and elsewhere in the empire. Reactions to Allied prisoners varied. Grant has written of the mutual sympathy that sometimes arose when Australian POWs and civilian Japanese came into contact, at workplaces for example.[57] Relations between Allied prisoners and Japanese soldiers and civilians were not always sympathetic, however. The attempt by the Japanese authorities to emphasise the humiliation of white prisoners seems to have been at least partly successful. When Japanese soldiers saw groups of Allied prisoners from a

NARA. See also Jonathan M. Wainwright, ed. Robert Considine, *General Wainwright's Story: the Account of Four Years of Humiliating Defeat, Surrender, and Captivity* (New York: Doubleday, 1946), pp. 233–259.

53 Utsumi, *Nihongun no horyo seisaku*, p. 200.

54 William-Powlett Memoir, Private Papers, Doc. 4495, IWM, pp. 7–8; Lieut.-Col. Paul A. Putnam, Prisoner of War Report, 17 Oct. 1945, p. 17, RG125, War Crimes Branch, Pacific, Box 3, File: Wake Island, 1945–47, NARA; Interrogation Report No. 456, pp. 7–8, RG165, General Staff, Military Intelligence, "P" File, Box 321, NARA.

55 'Furyo ni tsuite (Furyo jōhōkyoku)', p. 846.

56 John W. Dower, *War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War* (New York: Pantheon, 1986).

57 Lachlan Grant, 'Breaking Barriers: the Diversity of Prisoner-of-War Camps in Japan and Australian Contacts with Japanese Civilians', in Joan Beaumont, Lachlan Grant and Aaron Pegram (eds), *Beyond Surrender: Australian Prisoners of War in the Twentieth Century* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2015), pp. 227–230.

train window or working on the docks, supervised by 'small' Japanese soldiers, some felt hostility, but they also felt pride in Japanese victory.[58] Reactions were sometimes stronger. An Australian prisoner reported that one of his guards had begun to attack him, for no apparent reason, at a railway station on the way from the prison camp to a graphite works in the Kobe area. 'Several hundred Japanese civilians' waiting for the same train then gathered around, jeered, and urged the guard on in his attack.[59]

Some Japanese observers had very unrealistic impressions of the conditions under which POWs lived. When Japanese servicemen were captured and interrogated by the U.S. military, they were asked what they knew about Allied POWs and their replies sometimes revealed fanciful notions. One captive reported that Dutch prisoners at Palembang in Sumatra, who worked on public utilities works and gasoline refineries, were paid from half to the full amount of their former salaries; they were quartered at their former homes; and they were given passes to go to town for shopping. He added that prisoners in Japan were generally fed better than the native population because they were not subject to the ration system. A Japanese serviceman had seen about a hundred Americans being placed in trucks in Osaka, and had been told that they were on their way to a local spa.[60] Another informant, reporting on the situation of about 3000 Allied POWs working on machinery in Hitachi in Japan, had heard that on Sundays, POWs were allowed to go on hikes or to the cinema at nearby Mito. On those occasions, one military policeman would be assigned to guard every 100 POWs.[61]

Mistaken ideas about the condition of Allied prisoners may have made things harder for the prisoners. Evidence suggests that prison camp staff were sometimes under pressure from local residents – or from Japanese soldiers – not to treat the prisoners too well, especially, perhaps, in the later stages of the war when damage from Allied bombing raids was severe. The 'Prefect' (probably the Governor) of Hiroshima Prefecture told a group of prisoners at Miyoshi camp:

---

58 Oguri Shigeo, in Katō Tadashi (ed.), *Gifu-ken jūgun kaikoroku*, v. 2 (Gifu-shi: Jūgun kaikoroku hensan iinkai, 1970), p. 87; Che Manshik/Sai Banshoku, 'Dai TōA sensō dai ni nen (3): Furyo no shisa', in Ōmura Masuo and Hotei Toshihiro (eds), *Kindai Chōsen bungaku Nihongo sakuhinshū (1939–1945): hyōron zuihitsuhen 1* (Tōkyō: Ryokuin shobō, 2002), p. 386.

59 Kavanagh affidavit, 21 March 1946, p. 1, SP459/1/573/1/153, NAA Sydney.

60 ATIS Report no. 486, Part A, pp. 2, 4, 5, RG165, Box 321, Interrogation Reports #486–499, NARA. See also ATIS Report No. 502, p. 14, RG165, Box 321, Interrogation Reports #499–514, NARA.

61 ATIS Report no. 497, Part A, p. 4, RG165, Box 321, Interrogation Reports #486–499.

> The hostile feeling in this country is so bad that people are of opinion that the food supplied to you, is a great sacrifice. Your food rations at present are larger than those for Japanese subjects, therefore we cannot bear your complaints [about lack of food] any longer.... Hostile feelings are so bad here, that it is disapproved that Japanese food is withdrawn for your nourishment.[62]

At a POW camp in Kiangwan, north of Shanghai, a Red Cross representative reported that prisoners were receiving three times as much meat per day (150 grams) as the Japanese soldiers. The visitor nevertheless asked that the meat allowance be increased, because Allied prisoners were not used to a rice-based diet. When he claimed that Japanese internees and POWs detained in the U.S. received over 1 pound (nearly 500 grams) of meat per day, his army interpreter exploded. Japanese military authorities, he responded, could not be expected to feed the POWs, who were their enemies, better than they fed their own troops. Furthermore, how would the troops garrisoned next door feel if they knew that the prisoners, allegedly already better off because they received Red Cross parcels in addition to their normal rations, were receiving yet more favourable treatment than the Japanese soldiers on top of that?[63]

A Japanese corporal stated after the war that outside pressure had been partly responsible for the maltreatment of prisoners at Ōfuna Camp, near Yokohama. Local people, he claimed, 'confronted soldiers when they left camp with remarks such as, "Are PsW [POWs] treated as guests in the OFUNA Internment [sic] Camp?" and "Our comrades are undergoing great sacrifices for those PsW"'.[64] In March 1945, the Japanese newspaper *Yomiuri Hōchi* published complaints by certain members of the public that POWs working in Japanese factories were receiving better treatment than Japanese workers: allegedly they worked less, but were fed more. The complainants called for prisoners' privileges to be withdrawn, and for greater recognition of the 'indescribable privations' suffered by Japanese civilians in wartime.[65] Near an internment camp in the Kobe area, there had been 'quite emphatic protests' from locals

62 'Speech Delivered at Mijoshi [to the personnel of the "OP ten NOORT"] by the Prefect of Hiroshima', undated, RG125/290/982/69/3, Box 1, Folder: Araki et al. Set 4, 2 of 2, NARA. There is no such position as a Prefect.

63 'Report on My First Visit to the Prisoners' of War Camp near Shanghai, January 10, 1943', 15 Feb. 1943, p. 4, E2001–02#1000/114#386, SFA.

64 Translation of statement by Aramaki Soitsu, #2 Corporal of Guard, Ofuna, Nov. 1944–April 1945, RG331, Box 1288, Folder 6, NARA.

65 'Notice', 16 March 1945, E2001-02#1000/114#802, SFA.

in 1944 at the "'forced removal" of feeble and needy Japanese children to make room for husky foreigners' at the neighbourhood school.[66]

4 Conclusion

Individual acts of brutality by guards were responsible for some of the suffering in prison and internment camps in the Japanese empire. Systemic factors, however, were far more significant. Essentially, the Japanese military fought on a scale that was beyond its capacity. When early victories brought huge numbers of captives, the first solution was to release a large proportion of them. Though many of the former Asian captives were then used as a military labour force, they did not have the status of POWs and hence the facilities afforded to them could be of a lower grade. It remained necessary for the Japanese authorities to maintain about 140,000 captives as POWs, and about 130,000 civilian internees, with at least some regard to the requirements of international law. Shortages of food and other material goods, and problems with supply, meant that captives often could not be maintained at an adequate level. Moreover, ambitious war goals and a shortage of natural resources in Japan required the launch of major military mining, construction and manufacturing projects. For a mixture of practical and ideological reasons, POWs were made to work on these projects, which were constrained by the same shortages of materials and additional labour. The urgency of the work and the difficult conditions under which it was performed had a drastic effect on the wellbeing of many POWs. The contrasting, relatively more favourable conditions in some prison and internment camps where captives were not required to work show the importance of the work factor. Finally, the intense conditions of the war and the deprivations suffered by Japanese civilians and soldiers, in a context where POWs and internees were often visible to local populations, put pressure on local authorities responsible for prisoners and internees to maintain stern regimes in the detention centres.

References

Allen, Louis, *Singapore 1941–1942* (London: F. Cass, 1993).

Archer, Bernice, *The Internment of Western Civilians Under the Japanese, 1941–1945: a Patchwork of Internment* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004).

66 Swiss Consul, Kobe to Swiss Legation, Tokyo, 9 June 1944, E2200.136-2/1969/120#23, SFA.

Barkawi, Tarak, *Soldiers of Empire: Indian and British Armies in World War II* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

Baxter, George E., *Personal Experiences during the Siege of Hong Kong, December 8th–25th, 1941* (Sydney: East Asian Residents' Association, 194-).

Beaumont, Joan, 'Protecting Prisoners of War, 1939–95', in Bob Moore and Kent Fedorowich (eds), *Prisoners of War and their Captors in World War II* (Oxford: Berg, 1996), pp. 277–297.

Boyington, Gregory, *Baa Baa Black Sheep* (London: Putnam, 1958).

Che Manshik/Sai Banshoku, 'Dai TōA sensō dai ni nen (3): Furyo no shisa', in Ōmura Masuo and Hotei Toshihiro (eds), *Kindai Chōsen bungaku Nihongo sakuhinshū (1939–1945): hyōron zuihitsuhen 1* (Tōkyō: Ryokuin shobō, 2002), pp. 386–387.

Corbett, P. Scott, *Quiet Passages: the Exchange of Civilians between the United States and Japan During the Second World War* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1987).

Dagboek fragmenten 1940–1945 (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1954).

Douds, G.J., 'The Men Who Never Were: Indian POWs in the Second World War', *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*, Vol. 27, No. 2 (2004), pp. 183–216.

Dower, John W., *War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War* (New York: Pantheon, 1986).

Drea, Edward J., *Japan's Imperial Army: its Rise and Fall, 1853–1945* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2009).

Dunlop, E.E., *The War Diaries of Weary Dunlop: Java and the Burma-Thailand Railway 1942–1945* (Ringwood, Vic.: Penguin, 1990).

Elleman, Bruce, *Japanese-American Civilian Prisoner Exchanges and Detention Camps, 1941–45* (London: Routledge, 2006).

Fujiwara Iwaichi, trans. by Akashi Yoji, *F. Kikan: Japanese Army Intelligence Operations in Southeast Asia During World War II* (Hong Kong: Heinemann Asia, 1983).

Grant, Lachlan, 'Breaking Barriers: the Diversity of Prisoner-of-War Camps in Japan and Australian Contacts with Japanese Civilians', in Joan Beaumont, Lachlan Grant and Aaron Pegram (eds), *Beyond Surrender: Australian Prisoners of War in the Twentieth Century* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2015), pp. 218–238.

Hack, Karl and Kevin Blackburn, *Did Singapore Have to Fall? Churchill and the Impregnable Fortress* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004).

Havens, Thomas R.H., *Valley of Darkness: the Japanese People and World War II* (New York: Norton, 1978).

Havers, R.P.W., *Reassessing the Japanese Prisoner of War Experience: the Changi POW Camp, Singapore, 1942–45* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003).

Hayashi Eidai (ed.), *Senji gaikokujin kyōsei renkō kankei shiryōshū*, vol. 1 (Tōkyō: Akashi shoten, 1990).

Hayashi Eidai (ed.), *Senji gaikokujin kyōsei renkō kankei shiryōshū*, vol. 4 (Tōkyō: Akashi shoten, 1991).

Hayes, Thomas, ed. A.B. Feuer, *Bilibid Diary: the Secret Notebooks of Commander Thomas Hayes, POW the Philippines 1942–45* (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1987).

Jong, L. de, *The Collapse of a Colonial Society: the Dutch in Indonesia During the Second World War* (Leiden: KITLV Press, 2002).

Jong, L. de, *Het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden in de Tweede Wereldoorlog, 1939–1945* Volume 11a, Second Part (Leiden: Martinus Nijhoff, 1984).

Katō Tadashi (ed.), *Gifu-ken jūgun kaikoroku*, v. 2 (Gifu-shi: Jūgun kaikoroku hensan iinkai, 1970).

Kinvig, Clifford, *River Kwai Railway: the Story of the Burma-Siam Railroad* (London: Brassey's, 1992).

Lebra, Joyce Chapman, *The Indian National Army and Japan* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2008).

Lyon, Alan B., *Japanese War Crimes: Trials of the Naoetsu Camp Guards* (Loftus, NSW: Australian Military History Publications, 2000).

McCormack, Gavan and Hank Nelson (eds), *The Burma-Thailand Railway: Memory and History* (St Leonards, NSW: Allen and Unwin, 1993).

Maekawa, Kaori, 'The *Heiho* during the Japanese Occupation of Indonesia', in Paul Kratoska (ed.), *Asian Labor in the Wartime Japanese Empire: Unknown Histories* (New York: Routledge, 2005), pp. 179–196.

Morton, Louis, *The Fall of the Philippines* (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 1953).

Palmer, Brandon, *Fighting for the Enemy: Koreans in Japan's War, 1937–1945* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2013).

Piccigallo, Philip R., *The Japanese on Trial: Allied War Crimes Operations in the East, 1945–1951* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1979.)

Reid, Richard, *Laden, Fevered, Starved: the POWs of Sandakan, North Borneo, 1945* (Canberra: Commonwealth Department of Veteran Affairs, 1999).

'Research Starters: U.S. Military by the Numbers', The National WWII Museum, New Orleans, available at https://www.nationalww2museum.org/students-teachers/student-resources/research-starters/research-starters-us-military-numbers

Roland, Charles G., *Long Night's Journey into Day: Prisoners of War in Hong Kong and Japan, 1941–1945* (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2001).

Sareen, T.R., *Japan and the Indian National Army* (New Delhi: Mounto Publishing House, 1996).

Silver, Lynette Ramsay, *Sandakan: a Conspiracy of Silence* (Sydney: Sally Milner Publishing, 1998).

Tamayama, Kazuo, *Railwaymen in the War: Tales by Japanese Railway Soldiers in Burma and Thailand, 1941–1947* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

Tanaka, Yuki, *Hidden Horrors: Japanese War Crimes in World War II* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2nd edn, 2018).

Taucher, Paul, 'Command Responsibility at the Sandakan-Ranau War Crimes Trial', unpublished Honours Thesis, Murdoch University, 2016.

Utsumi Aiko, *Kimu wa naze sabakareta no ka: Chōsenjin BC-kyū senpan no kiseki* (Tokyo: Asahi shinbun, 2008).

Utsumi Aiko, *Nihongun no horyo seisaku* (Tokyo: Aoki shoten, 2005).

Utsumi Aiko, 'Prisoners of War in the Pacific War: Japan's Policy', in Gavan McCormack and Hank Nelson (eds), *The Burma-Thailand Railway: Memory and History* (St Leonards, NSW: Allen and Unwin, 1993), pp. 68–84.

Wainwright, Jonathan M., ed. Robert Considine, *General Wainwright's Story: the Account of Four Years of Humiliating Defeat, Surrender, and Captivity* (New York: Doubleday, 1946).

Wakabayashi, Bob Tadashi, Review of Utsumi, *Nihongun no horyo seisaku*, *Social Science Japan Journal*, Vol. 10, No. 1 (2007), pp. 111–114.

Warren, Alan, *Singapore 1942: Britain's Greatest Defeat* (Singapore: Talisman, 2002).

Wigmore, Lionel, *The Japanese Thrust* (Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1957).

Wilson, Sandra, Robert Cribb, Beatrice Trefalt and Dean Aszkielowicz, *Japanese War Criminals: the Politics of Justice After the Second World War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017).

Yap, Felicia, 'Prisoners of War and Civilian Internees of the Japanese in British Asia: the Similarities and Contrasts of Experience', *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 47, No. 2 (2012), pp. 317–346.

CHAPTER 12

Tan Toey Prisoner of War Camp: The Dilemmas of Command

Paul Taucher

Abstract

In February 1942, during the Japanese invasion of Ambon Island in the Netherlands Indies, a large number of Australian soldiers were captured by the Japanese navy. The prisoners were held in a camp on the island, where they were subject to beatings, deprivation of food and medical care, and, occasionally, summary executions, until their liberation at the end of the war in August 1945. After the Japanese surrender, the Australian military prosecuted Japanese personnel, both as direct participants, and as commanders of the participants, in the atrocities committed on Ambon. Commanders who had not ordered a crime, nor directly participated in a crime, could be tried for the crimes of their subordinates through the doctrine of command responsibility. Military tribunals in the post-war trials used command responsibility to answer difficult questions about the extent of a commander's responsibility for the actions of his subordinates, in circumstances that traditional legal methods were ill-equipped to deal with. This chapter discusses how an Australian military tribunal used the legal doctrine of command responsibility to prosecute two Japanese officers accused of indirect liability for crimes committed against prisoners on Ambon. The trial was initially held on Ambon Island, from 2 January until 18 January 1946, and later moved to Morotai Island, resuming on 25 January and closing on 15 February 1946.

Keywords

Command responsibility – Ambon – prisoners of war – war crimes trials – Second World War – food supply – Imperial Japanese Navy – detention camps

In late 1941 and early 1942, Japanese forces advanced rapidly across the Asia-Pacific region. The defending Allied forces were quickly overrun, and up to 350,000 Allied soldiers were captured by Japanese forces as prisoners of war (POWs). Many of these prisoners were Asian colonial troops, and were released

©

shortly afterwards.[1] According to figures presented at the International Military Tribunal for the Far East (IMTFE), 132,134 prisoners were white soldiers, who remained captive for the rest of the war.[2] In the ensuing months and years, these Allied POWs were either held where they were captured, or transported across the Japanese empire, to be used as a labour force. POW camps were set up at workplaces and other sites throughout the empire. Conditions were often very poor: climate and terrain were inhospitable, food and medicine were scarce, work schedules were demanding, and supply was unreliable. Some prison camp staff were brutal to prisoners; others did their best in the difficult circumstances. Of the 132,134 prisoners cited at the IMTFE, 35,756 died during the war, many of them in POW camps.[3]

In war crimes trials from 1945 onwards, Allied governments held thousands of Japanese military personnel responsible for the suffering and deaths of POWs throughout the camp system.[4] The defendants included mid-ranking and senior officers who were prosecuted for both their direct orders and their

1 Adachi Sumio, 'Kokusaijin dōhō saininshiki e no michi', *Hō to chitsujo*, Vol. 74, no. 5 (Sept. 1983), p. 25, cited in Aiko Utsumi, 'Prisoners of War in the Pacific War: Japan's Policy', in Gavan McCormack and Hank Nelson (eds), *The Burma-Thailand Railway: Memory and History* (St Leonards, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 1993), p. 81, n. 6.

2 Utsumi, 'Prisoners of War in the Pacific War', p. 68. The IMTFE number does not appear to include either British Indian soldiers or Philippine soldiers held for the rest of the war. See G.J. Douds, 'Indian POWs in the Pacific, 1941–1945', in Karl Hack and Kevin Blackburn (eds), *Forgotten Captives in Japanese-Occupied Asia* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008), p. 74; Karl Hack and Kevin Blackburn, 'Japanese Occupied Asia', in Hack and Blackburn (eds), *Forgotten Captives*, p. 10.

3 Utsumi, 'Prisoners of War in the Pacific War', p. 69. This number includes POWs who died at sea from friendly fire: see Gavan Daws, *Prisoners of the Japanese: POWs of World War II in the Pacific* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1994), p. 298.

4 Sandra Wilson, Robert Cribb, Beatrice Trefalt, and Dean Aszkielowicz, *Japanese War Criminals: the Politics of Justice After the Second World War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017); Philip R. Piccigallo, *The Japanese on Trial: Allied War Crimes Operations in the Far East, 1945–1951* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1979); Yuma Totani, *Justice in Asia and the Pacific Region 1945–1952: Allied War Crimes Prosecutions* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015); Georgina Fitzpatrick, Tim McCormack and Narrelle Morris (eds), *Australia's War Crimes Trials 1945–51* (Leiden: Brill-Nijhoff, 2016); Suzannah Linton (ed.), *Hong Kong's War Crimes Trials* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); Barak Kushner, 'Chinese War Crimes Trials of Japanese, 1945–1956: a Historical Summary', in Morten Bergsmo, Cheah Wui Ling and Yi Ping (eds), *The Historical Origins of International Criminal Law* (Brussels: Torkel Opsahl Academic Publisher, 2014), vol. 1, pp. 243–266; Barak Kushner, *Men to Devils, Devils to Men: Japanese War Crimes and Chinese Justice* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015); Neil Boister and Robert Cryer, *The Tokyo International Military Tribunal: A Reappraisal* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); Yuki Tanaka, Tim McCormack and Gerry Simpson (eds), *Beyond Victor's Justice: the Tokyo War Crimes Trial Revisited* (Leiden: Brill-Nijhoff, 2011); Richard Minear: *Victor's Justice: the Tokyo War Crimes Trial* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971); Yuma Totani, *The Tokyo War Crimes Trial: the Pursuit of Justice in the Wake of World*

failure to control the conduct of their subordinates. Tried under the relatively new doctrine of 'command responsibility',[5] camp commanders often received heavy sentences due to their failure to ensure the proper treatment of POWs. In this chapter I examine the command situation in one POW camp in Ambon in the Netherlands Indies, the camp at Tan Toey (today Tan Tui). After the Japanese capture of Ambon Island on 3 February 1942, approximately 1000 Dutch and Australian prisoners were held at Tan Toey, under the control of the Imperial Japanese Navy. Over the next three and a half years approximately 400 captives died at the camp, as a result of illness, overwork, and mistreatment.[6] Tan Toey provides an excellent example of the problems of discipline, supply and an overburdened and overlapping command structure that many Japanese officers faced at POW camps on small islands in the Pacific.

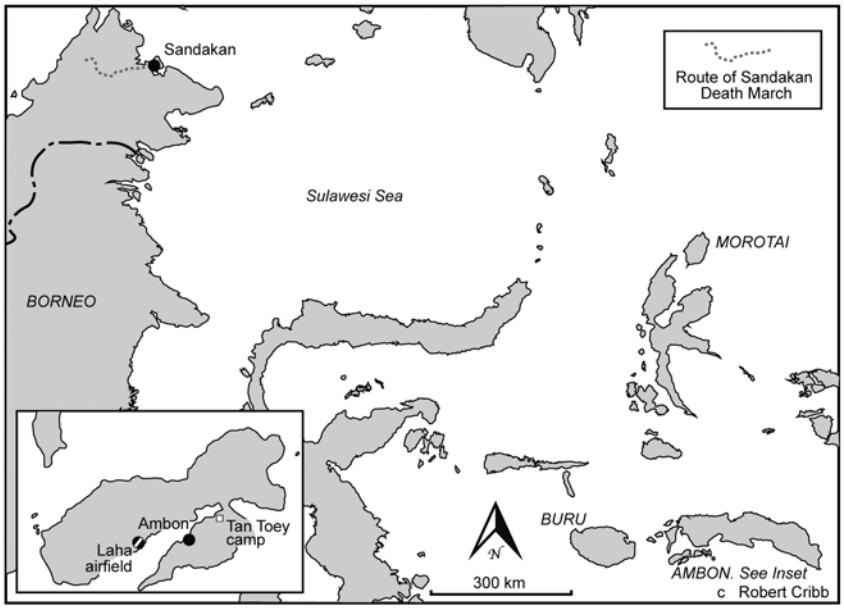
After the war, the Australian military held several trials for atrocities committed by Japanese soldiers and civilians on Ambon, including crimes against POWs at Tan Toey Camp. Trial records provide ample evidence about conditions in the camp and how commanders dealt with them. Here I focus on the case against Captain Shirozu Wadami, the naval officer who was in charge of the camp.[7] I argue that the conditions at the Tan Toey camp were to a

War II (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2008); Timothy Maga, *Judgement at Tokyo: the Japanese War Crimes Trial* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2001).

5 On the principle of command responsibility see Guénaël Mettraux, *The Law of Command Responsibility* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); Gideon Boas and Lisa Lee, 'Command Responsibility and Other Grounds of Criminal Responsibility', in Fitzpatrick, McCormack and Morris (eds), *Australia's War Crimes Trials 1945–51*, pp. 134–174; David Cohen, 'The Singapore War Crimes Trials and Their Relevance Today', *Singapore Law Review,* Vol. 31 (2013), pp. 7–23; L.C. Green, 'Command Responsibility in International Humanitarian Law', *Transnational Law and Contemporary Problems*, Vol. 5 (1995), pp. 319–341; W.H. Parks, 'Command Responsibility for War Crimes', *Military Law Review*, Vol. 62 (1973), pp. 1–104.

6 For descriptions of the Tan Toey POW Camp, see Peter Henning, *Doomed Battalion: Mateship and Leadership in War and Captivity, The Australian 2/40 Battalion 1940–1945* (St Leonards, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 1995); Roger Maynard, *Ambon: the Truth About One of the Most Brutal POW Camps in World War II and the Triumph of the Aussie Spirit* (Sydney: Hachette Military Collection, 2014); Joan Beaumont, *Gull Force: Survival and Leadership in Captivity 1941–1945* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1988), Chapters 1–6; Courtney Harrison, *Ambon, Island of Mist: 2/21st Battalion AIF* (*Gull Force*) *Prisoners of War 1941–1945* (Geelong, Vic.: T.W. and C.T. Harrison, 1988).

7 In this chapter, Japanese names are given with surname first. National Archives of Australia, MP742/1, 391237, M45: War Crimes Trial of Captain Shirozu Wadami and 92 Others, Ambon from 2 January to 18 January 1946 and Morotai from 25 January to 15 February 1946, Part One, accessed at [https://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRetrieve/Interface/DetailsReports/ItemDetail.aspx?Barcode=721016&isAv=N]; M45 War Crimes Trial of Captain Shirozu Wadami and 92 Others, Ambon from 2 January to 18 January 1946 and Morotai from 25 January to 15 February 1946, Part Two (hereafter M45: Part Two), accessed at [https://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRetrieve/Interface/ViewImage.aspx?B=1652599].



MAP 12.1 Japanese POW camps: Ambon and Borneo

significant extent outside Shirozu's control. At the same time, the trial shows that Shirozu made little effort to improve conditions at the camp when he was in a position to do so. The failure by the commanding officer to ameliorate the prisoners' conditions was not unique to Tan Toey and was repeated at prison camps across the Japanese empire.

1 The Invasion of Ambon and the Conditions in the Camp

The Japanese navy's invasion of Ambon Island began on 30 January 1942, ending just four days later on 3 February. At the outbreak of the war in the Pacific, Ambon was a Dutch colonial territory, but the Australian military had also participated in its defence, because it had an airfield and was close to Australia.[8] Approximately 1100 Australian soldiers sought to protect Ambon, in a formation known as Gull Force.[9] Casualties during the battle for Ambon in January-February 1942 were relatively light. However, after the surrender of

8 David Evans, 'The Ambon Forward Observation Line Strategy 1941–1942: a Lesson in Military Incompetence' (Unpublished PhD Dissertation, Murdoch University, 2010), p. 6.

9 On Gull Force, see Beaumont, *Gull Force*.

Allied forces on the island, approximately 300 Allied POWs were massacred by the Japanese naval personnel at Laha airfield.[10] The remaining POWs were placed in the Tan Toey POW Camp, which was run by the 24th Naval Base Force of the 2nd Southern Area Expeditionary Fleet from February 1942 until December 1943, after which it was run by the 25th Naval Base Force of the 4th Southern Area Expeditionary Fleet until the end of the war. Captain Shirozu Wadami replaced Captain Andō Noburo in December 1943 as the commander of the camp. As Andō had committed suicide shortly after the war ended, Shirozu was the most senior officer tried by the Australian military for crimes committed at Tan Toey POW Camp.

Initially, conditions at the camp were relatively good. Prisoners were allowed to trade with local villagers for food and other items and had relatively little work to do. However, by late 1942, things had changed. Approximately 500 of the POWs, including the majority of officers, were sent to Hainan Island, off the coast of the Chinese mainland. For the Japanese military, it was common practice to remove officers from the more far flung POW camps and send them closer to secure Japanese territory.[11] The same thing happened at around the same time, for example, at Sandakan POW Camp in North Borneo.[12] Removal of their officers deprived the remaining POWs of a significant safeguard. Officers provided some, albeit limited, protection from Japanese mistreatment, by complaining formally to their captors, as well as organising soldiers to support each other, so their removal almost certainly had a deleterious effect on conditions for other prisoners.

Physical mistreatment was one issue at Tan Toey. The frequency and severity of punishment and torture of POWs by the Japanese guards increased after the Allied officers' departure. In early November 1942, approximately twenty-eight Australian prisoners were tortured continuously over three days by their captors after temporarily leaving the camp to trade and socialize with locals at a nearby village. Of the twenty-eight soldiers, eleven were later summarily executed, presumably for their role in the breakout.[13] In July 1943, several Dutch POWs who were caught exchanging letters with Dutch civilians interned in a separate camp were heavily beaten for several hours.[14] As well as these major events, POWs were routinely beaten for minor infractions of camp rules.

---

10 Barnett, *Ambon*, pp. 173–178; Beaumont, *Gull Force*, pp. 54–56.

11 Daws, *Prisoners of the Japanese*, p. 105.

12 Paul Taucher, 'Command Responsibility at the Sandakan-Ranau War Crimes Trials' (Unpublished Honours Dissertation, Murdoch University, 2016), p. 42.

13 M45: Part One, Charge Sheet, pp. 2–4.

14 M45: Part Two, Australian War Crimes Commission Questionnaire, John Charles van Nooten, pp. 32.

The adequacy of food and medicine supplied to POWs presented another set of issues. As the war progressed in favour of the Allies, provisions steadily decreased, as fewer Japanese supply ships could safely reach Ambon. As a result, many prisoners became sick with diseases such as dysentery and beri-beri, and many contracted tropical ulcers. The official cause of death for the majority of POWs was listed as beri-beri, a disease resulting from poor nutrition.[15] However, two former prisoners alleged that this cause of death was recorded at the insistence of a civilian interpreter, Ikeuchi Masakiyo, to cover up deaths from beatings and starvation, an allegation that Ikeuchi denied.[16] Immediately after the Japanese surrender in August 1945, according to evidence presented at the trial, the Japanese forces on Ambon inundated Tan Toey with food, medicine, and fresh clothes, thus proving, according to prosecutors, that supplies had been deliberately withheld during wartime.[17]

Deaths also increased because of Allied bombing in the later stages of the war, and because of the nature and amount of work in which prisoners were forced to engage. Requests by Allied officers to have the camp marked as a POW camp were refused by their captors. In February 1943, approximately twenty Tan Toey POWs died when a munitions dump was blown up during an Allied air raid.[18] The storage of munitions in a POW camp was also illegal under international law.[19] Several prisoners were killed when, despite their objections, they were forced to defuse unexploded ordnance with metal hammers, instead of wooden or rubber hammers. Sick POWs recovering in a makeshift hospital were forced out of bed to work on construction sites, and regularly were made to carry building supplies over eight miles of rough terrain.[20]

2 The Trial of Captain Shirozu Wadami

The trial of Shirozu and his subordinates for crimes committed at Tan Toey Camp was the largest conducted in the Asia-Pacific region after the Second World War.[21] The ninety-two defendants ranged from Shirozu as commander

15 M45: Part Two, Nominal Roll, pp. 229–258.

16 M45: Part One, Statement of Ikeuchi Masakiyo, p. 446.

17 M45: Part One, Charge Sheet, pp. 2–4.

18 Beaumont, *Gull Force*, pp. 103–105.

19 'Convention between the United States of America and Other Powers, Relating to Prisoners of War; July 27, 1929 [Geneva Convention]', Article 9, https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/geneva02.asp#art9.

20 M45: Part One, Charge Sheet, pp. 2–4.

21 Wilson, Cribb, Trefalt, Aszkielowicz, *Japanese War Criminals*, p. 68.

of the camp to low ranking petty officers and a Japanese civilian interpreter.[22] All of the accused military servicemen were members of the Japanese navy. The trial was initially convened on Ambon Island, from 2 January until 18 January 1946, but was then moved to Morotai Island, resuming on 25 January and closing on 15 February 1946, as the Dutch government had agreed to only four months of provisional control of the island by the Australian military.[23] Of the ninety-two defendants, fifty-five were acquitted, while the guilty received sentences ranging from death by shooting to one year of imprisonment.[24]

All ninety-two of the accused were charged with ill-treating Australian and Dutch POWs by physically beating and torturing them, compelling sick and infirm POWs to work, failing to ensure the proper provision of food supplies, and failing to ensure the provision of proper medical supplies and medical care.[25] Captain Shirozu was charged with these offences, along with his subordinates: that is, he was charged with the direct commission of war crimes. It is evident, however, that he was really being held responsible for crimes against POWs under the doctrine of command responsibility, though this was not explicitly stated during the trial. The predisposal of Allied war crimes tribunals to charge multiple suspects at the same time, for practical or other reasons,[26] meant that the charges did not always reflect what the prosecution actually argued in court against individual defendants. The wording of the particulars of the charges, however, shows that Shirozu was considered liable for his failure to prevent the ill-treatment of POWs by subordinates under his command.[27] He was thus effectively found guilty under the doctrine of command responsibility, even if that doctrine was not specifically expounded during the proceedings.

Shirozu was in command of the camp from December 1943 until the end of the war.[28] He was charged with personally beating POWs and failing to provide adequate food. No evidence was raised to suggest that Shirozu had hit any prisoner during his command. Found guilty on both charges, he was sentenced to death by firing squad, which constituted a small form of mercy, as it was considered preferable to a military man to hanging, the more usual method of

22 M45: Part One, Charge Sheet, pp. 2–4.
23 Georgina Fitzpatrick, 'The Trials on Morotai', in Fitzpatrick, McCormack and Morris (eds), *Australia's War Crimes Trials*, pp. 384–388.
24 M45: Part One, Appendix A, Accused Found Guilty Sentence and Date, p. 8.
25 M45: Part One, Charge Sheet, p. 2.
26 Wilson, Cribb, Trefalt, Aszkielowicz, *Japanese War Criminals*, p. 68.
27 M45: Part One, Charge Sheet, pp. 3–4.
28 M45: Part Two, Command Structure of Japanese Forces on Ambon Island, pp. 4–12.

execution.[29] Though most executions took place relatively soon after sentencing, Shirozu was not executed until 25 September 1947, so that he could appear as a witness in several other trials for crimes committed on Ambon.[30]

3 Disciplining Prisoners: The Problem of Physical Punishment

During Shirozu's command of Tan Toey, his subordinates used beatings to discipline Allied prisoners. This form of punishment had been initiated by the previous commander of the camp, Captain Andō. Andō had ordered, and indeed taken part in, in the mass beating of Australian POWs in November 1942, and the beating of Dutch captives in July 1943. Shirozu had inherited command of a camp where a system of heavy-handed beatings and torture as methods of punishment was already in place. During Shirozu's command of the camp, however, there were no mass beatings. The evidence shows that beatings were meted out to individual captives for infractions of camp rules, such as failing to salute Japanese guards, or not working hard enough on building Japanese defences, and when guards suspected that prisoners were feigning illness to avoid work and camp duties.[31]

The use of physical punishment was not unusual at Japanese-run prison camps, nor, indeed, within the Japanese military. Rather than relying on formal written warnings, imposition of menial labour or imprisonment – forms of punishment to which Allied soldiers would have been accustomed – both the Japanese navy and the army used summary beatings by both non-commissioned officers and officers as an immediate form of punishment.[32] In nearly all trials in which charges of physically beating prisoners were laid, the defence maintained that such treatment was a standard punishment across the Japanese military. Shirozu made the same claim and took it one step further: he argued that one hundred beatings over three years ought to be viewed as one hundred single instances, rather than as evidence of systematic abuse.[33] Through this argument, Shirozu was clearly attempting not only to downplay his responsibility for the beatings, by arguing that physical punishment was a core part of

29 Wilson, Cribb, Trefalt, Aszkielowicz, *Japanese War Criminals*, pp. 92, 102.

30 M45: Part One, Warrant of Execution: Captain Shirozu Wadami, p. 97.

31 M45: Part Two, Australian War Crimes Questionnaire, John Charles van Nooten, pp. 32–33.

32 Gavan McCormack, 'Apportioning the Blame: Australian Trials for Railway Crimes', in McCormack and Nelson (eds), *The Burma-Thailand Railway*, p. 87; Colin Sleeman (ed.), *Trial of Gozawa Sadaichi and Nine Others* (London: William Hodge and Company, 1948), xxiv–xxvi; Wilson, Cribb, Trefalt and Aszkielowicz, *Japanese War Criminals*, p. 75.

33 M45: Part One, Defending Officer's Closing Address, p. 453.

the Japanese military's system of discipline, but also that the beatings were not widespread enough for them to be considered a pattern of behaviour and therefore a serious crime.

The use of physical punishment may also have stemmed from the perceived lack of an alternative option. The POWs were already in a prison camp, so it was nearly impossible to deny their liberty any further. In addition, the prisoner diet was already extremely basic, consisting mostly of tapioca, sweet potato and rice, with few other vegetables and little meat. Therefore, restricting offenders to a subsistence diet was not an option for punishment: it was already a reality.

4 Food Supply

The prosecution established that in late 1944, the rations of the prisoners were substantially less than those of their Japanese guards. This situation was a direct breach of the 1929 Geneva Convention on Prisoners of War, which stipulated that captives were to be given food in equivalent quantity and quality to that of their guards.[34] In August 1944, Shirozu had ordered that the POWs' rations be cut, following the destruction of food stores during an Allied bombing raid. Shirozu argued that restocking of food supplies had been impossible due to an Allied blockade of the island, which meant that food for both POWs and Japanese soldiers needed to be reduced.[35] In an attempt to achieve self-sufficiency, the prisoners were ordered to farm their own crops, mostly sweet potato and tapioca, a practice that was widespread amongst island garrisons across the Japanese empire.[36] However, with limited farming tools, and a labour shortage caused by the fact that the prisoners were already being used as a labour force elsewhere on the island, the farm was not enough to sustain the captives without additional supplies. Shirozu was placed in a difficult position: there was not enough food to keep his own soldiers in fighting condition and to give adequate sustenance to the captives as well. Shirozu chose to maintain the condition of his own soldiers at the expense of the Allied prisoners.

The position that Shirozu found himself in was almost inevitable, due to poor planning by the Japanese military prior to the outbreak of the conflict in

34 'Convention between the United States of America and Other Powers, Relating to Prisoners of War', Article 11.

35 M45 Part One, Petition of Captain Shirozu Wadami, p. 24.

36 Aaron Willliam Moore, 'An Insatiable Parasite: Eating and Drinking in WWII Armies of the Asia-Pacific Theatre (1937–1945)', in Katarzyna J. Cwiertka (ed.), *Food and War in Mid-Twentieth Century Asia* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), pp. 124–125.

Asia. In November 1941, Japanese military planners had estimated that out of the 6.7 million tons of merchant shipping available, the military would require close to 4 million tons. However, the Japanese civilian economy required more than 3 million tons to maintain pre-1941 production. Therefore, the Japanese economy and military could ill afford heavy losses of shipping, and predicted losses were overly optimistic.[37] Immediately after the outbreak of war, the U.S. navy began a campaign of unrestricted submarine warfare, meaning that any Japanese ship, regardless of whether it was civilian or military, could and would be targeted. Initially U.S. submarines were relatively ineffective, owing to faulty torpedo design. By late 1943, however, they were equipped with an effective and reliable torpedo and began to sink large numbers of Japanese ships. Post-war reports by the Japanese civilian cabinet claimed that the greatest cause of defeat was the loss of shipping, principally brought about by enemy submarines.[38]

The unrestricted submarine warfare was extremely damaging to the Japanese military's ability to supply island garrisons such as Ambon. In August 1941, well before the outbreak of war across the Pacific, the army Vice-Chief of Staff, Lieutenant-General Tsukada Osamu, warned that spreading soldiers across the Pacific on small islands would cause a serious supply problem, advice that was ignored.[39] During the war, the Japanese army and navy continued to man strategically insignificant islands when there was little military benefit. This situation placed increased strain on the already stretched merchant marine. Land for agriculture was limited and the large number of soldiers on an island meant that the restricted farming that could be carried out was often inadequate. The amount of shipping supplying a widely spread force was already insufficient, and by the end of 1943, the Allied submarine fleet was an extremely effective attack force. As a result, providing adequate supplies to both Japanese soldiers and their prisoners was an impossible task for the Japanese military.[40] The military paid a remarkably high price for its inability to supply its own troops. One estimate attributes over 50% of Japanese deaths during the war to lack of food

37 Edward J. Drea, *Japan's Imperial Army: its Rise and Fall, 1853–1945* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2009), p. 229.

38 Joel Ira Holwitt, *Execute Against Japan: the U.S Decision to Conduct Unrestricted Submarine Warfare* (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2009), pp. 164–168.

39 Lizzie Collingham, *The Taste of War: World War II and the Battle for Food* (New York: Penguin Press, 2012), p. 285.

40 B.F. Johnston, *Japanese Food Management in World War II* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1953), p. 141.

and medicine.[41] After the war, Japanese soldiers on small islands recounted that though better off than civilians and prisoners, they had still suffered from starvation and illness in large numbers.[42]

Tan Toey POW Camp was, according to Shirozu, intended to be a temporary camp. The camp was set up shortly after the fall of Ambon Island, and was relatively close to the frontline of the Japanese empire, meaning that the POWs were at risk from military operations, and, more concerning for the Japanese military, might possibly be liberated by the Allies. Shirozu also claimed that the navy was not meant to hold prisoners for extended periods, but was supposed to transfer custody to the Japanese army.[43] Shortly after their capture, half of the prisoners, including most of the officers, were moved to a permanent naval POW camp on Hainan Island in Japanese occupied China, where the conditions, though still harsh, were better than those on Ambon. It is highly likely that since Tan Toey was intended to be a temporary camp, logistical and bureaucratic support was deliberately limited. Camps on the outer edges of the Japanese empire generally experienced worse conditions than did other camps, with less oversight from both the Japanese government and the International Red Cross.[44]

After the Japanese surrender on Ambon in August 1945, the Allied POWs received an immediate and significant increase in rations. A likely explanation is that the captors were wary of future reprisals from the victorious Allies, and were attempting to gain favour from their former captives. Another possible explanation is that with the war over, the island garrison was no longer dependent on its supply reserves, and could afford to increase rations without fear of long-term starvation.

5 Overburdened and Chaotic Command

The Tan Toey Camp had several problems in its command structure. Shirozu delegated command to inexperienced sub-commanders, who were in charge of ill-disciplined troops. Further exacerbating the situation, the remaining Allied officers were inexperienced, which meant that the prisoners were slow to or unable to adapt to difficult conditions.

41 Drea, *Japan's Imperial Army*, p. 238.
42 Collingham, *The Taste of War*, p. 251.
43 M45: Part Two, Report of Interrogation of Captain Shirozu Wadami, p. 23.
44 Utsumi, 'Prisoners of War in the Pacific War', p. 74.

Upon assuming command of the Tan Toey Camp, Shirozu made brief inquiries about the camp's operation of two of his subordinates, Lieutenant Miyazaki Yoshio, who was responsible for the camp guards, and the civilian interpreter Ikeuchi. Shirozu claims that he ordered his subordinates to treat the POWs kindly, before delegating the day-to-day running of the camp to them.[45] By all accounts, Miyazaki paid little attention to the actions of his subordinates, and in that sense was similar to Shirozu. Ikeuchi was seen by the prisoners as the true commander of the camp, and wielded considerable influence over how they were treated.[46] Though Shirozu lived in a town close to the camp, and passed by the camp regularly, he only visited the camp twice during his command, relying instead on the reports of his subordinates. As well as being in command of the Tan Toey camp, Shirozu was also the Ambon garrison commander, in charge of the island's defences.[47] It is evident that he was more concerned with commanding the defence of the island than with the running of the Tan Toey Camp.

Shirozu's delegation of responsibility for the camp to a junior officer and a civilian meant that the POWs were under the command of inexperienced and, most likely, undertrained staff. Camp staff were often appointed from among soldiers who were of no particular use elsewhere: it would not make sense for a military to set well-disciplined and competent soldiers to the task of guarding prisoners, especially on an isolated island.[48] Furthermore, for nearly all members of the Japanese military, especially those outside of the general staff, there were often no clear instructions on how to treat prisoners. In some instances, POW camp staff who treated captives well were suspected of being enemy sympathisers.[49]

Shirozu's delegation of responsibility and apparent assumption that his orders would be followed, together with his failure to carry out frequent inspections of his own, were not uncommon among senior officers in command of POW camps. Colin Sleeman, a British war crimes prosecutor during the trials of accused Japanese war criminals in Hong Kong, concluded that unit commanders in Japanese-occupied Asia were mostly figureheads, with the majority of the actual work undertaken by garrison units done by senior non-commissioned officers (NCOs) and low-ranking officers.[50] On the Burma-Thailand Railway,

45 M45: Part One, Petition of Captain Shirozu Wadami, p. 24.
46 M45: Part Two, Evidence of VX39263 Captain Gordon Carlyle Marshall, p. 67.
47 M45: Part Two, Interrogation of Captain Shirozu Wadami, pp. 23–25.
48 Utsumi, 'Prisoners of War in the Pacific War', p. 73.
49 Ibid., pp. 71–73.
50 Sleeman (ed.), *Trial of Gozawa Sadaichi and Nine Others*, xxiv–xxvi.

Songkurai (No. 2) Camp, one of the major POW camps, was run by domineering and violent NCOs and low-level officers, despite the presence of a senior officer who made repeated gestures towards improving the conditions of the captives.[51] Thus, the quality of NCOs and low-ranking officers might be more likely to affect the treatment of captives than the quality of a commander.

The lack of experience of Allied officers also contributed to the poor conditions at Tan Toey Camp. Following the removal of the majority of captive Allied officers from Tan Toey to Hainan, the remaining officers were relatively low-ranking, with little field experience. These officers were also placed in a difficult position, where they were required to maintain morale and limit the exposure of their troops to reprisals from Japanese troops. In Tan Toey, small bamboo cages, designed to put POWs who broke camp rules into a crude form of solitary confinement, were built. But it was not the Japanese guards who instituted this form of punishment, it was the Allied officers. They justified the punishment by arguing that it was harsh enough to ensure that the Japanese guards would not intervene and demand further punishment, and that a breakdown of discipline amongst the captives, including escape attempts and individual thefts from the prisoners' collective rations, meant that it was necessary to maintain control.[52]

Allied officers were reported to have taken extra rations from the camp farm, especially after 1944. Often, officers were not required to work on Japanese labour projects. They therefore could spend more time cultivating food in the camp farm. After the war, enlisted soldiers complained that the officers justified their extra rations on the basis that they had grown it, oblivious to the fact that for the enlisted soldier, there was no time and often no energy to grow extra food.[53]

The conditions at the camp were not the fault of Allied officers, but their conduct could exacerbate or ameliorate the difficult conditions. It was often the case that POW officers' leadership was a significant factor in the survival rate of prisoners. On the Burma-Thailand Railway, several camps had officers who were profoundly aware of their subordinates' suffering, took beatings in place of their own men, and worked hard to gain additional supplies through

51 Robin Rowland, 'Command Ability and Command Responsibility: Lt. Col. Hirateru Banno and the "F Force" Trials' (Unpublished Masters Thesis, York University, 2003); Sybilla Jane Flower, 'Captors and Captives on The Burma-Thailand Railway', in Bob Moore and Kent Fedorowich (eds), *Prisoners of War and their Captors in World War II* (Oxford: Berg, 1996), p. 238.

52 Beaumont, *Gull Force*, pp. 132–142.

53 Ibid., pp. 184, 212.

any means necessary.[54] In other instances, officers were more focused on their own survival, to disastrous effect for their own men.[55]

As well as Shirozu's unit, the Japanese navy's military police, the Tokkeitai, also had some degree of formal control over the POWs, further complicating the command structure. During the Japanese occupation of Asia, the Tokkeitai and its army counterpart, the Kenpeitai, had a reputation for brutal interrogations involving torture and, sometimes, the summary execution of suspected guerrillas and captured aviators.[56] In his post-war interrogation by Australian war crimes investigators, Shirozu claimed that Lieutenant Commander Baron Takasaki Masamitsu, a Tokkeitai officer, had been responsible for the general administration of the camp, including the legal affairs of the prisoners. While Shirozu's interrogation does not describe the exact nature of Takasaki's responsibility or what the legal affairs of the prisoners were considered to be, Shirozu's assertion evidently convinced one Australian prosecutor or war crimes investigator. A handwritten note appears in the margins of the report: "Takasaki Responsibility!"[57] The writer of the note clearly felt that Takasaki had either had some role in allowing the prisoners to be abused or had failed in his duty as a general administrator and relatively senior officer to prevent further abuse. After the war, Takasaki was unsuccessfully prosecuted by the Australian military, and later the Dutch military, for crimes committed on Ambon Island. Further efforts were made to prosecute Takasaki in 1948, presumably for his connection to crimes committed at Tan Toey POW Camp, but by that stage, the Australian trials for suspected war criminals were slowing down, and he was repatriated to Japan.[58]

Despite the copious evidence presented to the court concerning the problems faced by Shirozu as commander, the bench took a harsh stance. Shirozu was sentenced to death. Ikeuchi and Miyazaki were also sentenced to death, but none of the guards who actively hurt the prisoners received a death sentence.

---

54 Flower, 'Captors and Captives', pp. 244–246.

55 Hank Nelson, 'Measuring the Railway: From Individual Lives to National History', in McCormack and Nelson (eds), *The Burma-Thailand Railway*, pp. 17–18; McCormack, 'Apportioning the Blame', p. 110.

56 Raymond Lamont-Brown, *Kempetai: Japan's Dreaded Military Police* (Stroud: Sutton, 1998) p. 27.

57 M45: Part Two, Report of Interrogation of Captain Shirozu Wadami, p. 23.

58 Paul Taucher, 'Escape From Justice: The Failed Prosecutions of Baron Takasaki Masamitsu', *War in History*, forthcoming [https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0968344518804839]; National Archives of Australia, MP742/1, 336/1/1608, 392849, Commander Baron Takasaki Masamitsu, Army External Affairs to Australian Consul General, Batavia, 1 September 1948, pp. 16–17; Dean Aszkielowicz, *The Australian Pursuit of Japanese War Criminals 1943–1957: From Foe to Friend* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2017), p. 59.

6 Conclusion

Multiple factors that were largely outside of Shirozu's control led to the provision of insufficient food to prisoners, as well as widespread beating and some deaths. Officers and NCOs across the Japanese military condoned the use of summary physical punishment amongst their own soldiers. The use of physical punishment on POWs was, for the average Japanese soldier, a logical extension of the practice. Shirozu's predecessor took this to another level by instituting prolonged torture of POWs who had violated camp rules, no doubt further normalising the ill-treatment of captives. Physical punishment was therefore a deeply ingrained policy before Shirozu took command of the camp. The Japanese military was underprepared to supply its soldiers and prisoners across the empire, let alone on relatively small islands that became increasingly isolated from supply routes as the Allies began to dominate the Pacific Ocean. Shirozu was forced to choose between his own soldiers and POWs. It is likely that the decrease in prisoners' rations was seen by the Japanese soldiers as a form of justice: after all, it was the Allied military that had destroyed the garrison's supply depot and was blockading the island. The presence of a relatively senior member of the Tokkeitai, Takasaki, who was later connected to numerous war crimes, would also likely have contributed to the harsh conditions at the camp.

To a reasonable extent, Shirozu did not have control over a range of factors that led to the ill-treatment and death of prisoners under his command. He had also taken steps to delegate his responsibility to his subordinates. Both factors ought to have lessened his legal culpability. However, the court clearly held that as a senior officer, it was his duty to find a way to overcome the obstacles he faced. Shirozu ought to have made sure that both prisoners and soldiers were getting the same rations, regardless of the destroyed supplies. He should have taken steps to alleviate the suffering of the POWs by regularly checking on the conditions at the camp, rather than relying on the reports of his subordinates who had a history of abusing POWs. The tribunal evidently held that Shirozu was criminally negligent. Shirozu's role as a senior officer was to adapt to the situation he faced. The tribunal found that he had failed in his job as a commanding officer. Furthermore, the harsh sentence shows that the tribunal likely took the view that rather than being 'asleep at the wheel', Shirozu had carried out a planned policy of neglect.

The tribunal's decision to order Shirozu's execution, but not that of any of the guards who had directly participated in crimes against prisoners, suggests that the Australian military saw low-ranking direct perpetrators as a cog in a machine with little agency over their actions. The real guilt for the

widespread commission of war crimes fell on officers, like Shirozu, who were deemed to have had the opportunity to make changes.

References

Adachi, Sumio, 'Kokusaijin dōhō saininshiki e no michi', *Hō to chitsujo*, Vol. 74, no. 5 (Sept. 1983).

Aszkielowicz, Dean, *The Australian Pursuit of Japanese War Criminals 1943–1957: From Foe to Friend* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2017).

Beaumont, Joan, *Gull Force: Survival and Leadership in Captivity 1941–1945* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1988), Chapters 1–6.

Boas, Gideon, and Lisa Lee, 'Command Responsibility and Other Grounds of Criminal Responsibility', in Georgina Fitzpatrick, Tim McCormack and Narrelle Morris (eds), *Australia's War Crimes Trials 1945–51* (Leiden: Brill-Nijhoff, 2016), pp. 134–178.

Boister, Neil, and Robert Cryer, *The Tokyo International Military Tribunal: A Reappraisal* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

Cohen, David, 'The Singapore War Crimes Trials and Their Relevance Today', *Singapore Law Review*, Vol. 31 (2013), pp. 3–38.

Collingham, Lizzie, *The Taste of War: World War II and the Battle for Food* (New York: Penguin Press, 2012).

Daws, Gavin, *Prisoners of the Japanese: POWs of World War II in the Pacific* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1994).

Douds, G.J., 'Indian POWs in the Pacific, 1941–1945', in Karl Hack and Kevin Blackburn (eds), *Forgotten Captives in Japanese-Occupied Asia* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008), pp. 73–93.

Drea, Edward J., *Japan's Imperial Army: its Rise and Fall, 1853–1945* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2009).

Evans, David, 'The Ambon Forward Observation Line Strategy 1941–1942: a Lesson in Military Incompetence' (Unpublished PhD Dissertation, Murdoch University, 2010).

Fitzpatrick, Georgina, 'The Trials on Morotai', in Georgina Fitzpatrick, Tim McCormack and Narrelle Morris (eds), *Australia's War Crimes Trials* (Leiden: Brill-Nijhoff, 2016), pp. 373–407.

Fitzpatrick, Georgina, Tim McCormack and Narrelle Morris (eds), *Australia's War Crimes Trials 1945–51* (Leiden: Brill-Nijhoff, 2016).

Flower, Sybilla Jane, 'Captors and Captives on The Burma-Thailand Railway', in Bob Moore and Kent Fedorowich (eds), *Prisoners of War and their Captors in World War II* (Oxford: Berg, 1996), pp. 227–252.

Green, L.C., 'Command Responsibility in International Humanitarian Law', *Transnational Law and Contemporary Problems*, Vol. 5 (1995), pp. 319–341.

Hack, Karl, and Kevin Blackburn, 'Japanese Occupied Asia', in Karl Hack and Kevin Blackburn (eds), *Forgotten Captives in Japanese-Occupied Asia* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008), pp. 73–93.

Harrison, Courtney, *Ambon, Island of Mist: 2/21st Battalion AIF* (*Gull Force*) *Prisoners of War 1941–1945* (Geelong, Vic.: T.W. and C.T. Harrison, 1988).

Henning, Peter, *Doomed Battalion: Mateship and Leadership in War and Captivity, the Australian 2/40 Battalion 1940–1945* (St Leonards, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 1995).

Holwitt, Joel Ira, *Execute Against Japan: the U.S Decision to Conduct Unrestricted Submarine Warfare* (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2009).

Johnston, B.F., *Japanese Food Management in World War II* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1953).

Kushner, Barak, 'Chinese War Crimes Trials of Japanese, 1945–1956: a Historical Summary', in Morten Bergsmo, Cheah Wui Ling and Yi Ping (eds), *The Historical Origins of International Criminal Law* (Brussels: Torkel Opsahl Academic Publisher, 2014), vol. I, pp. 243–265.

Kushner, Barak, *Men to Devils, Devils to Men: Japanese War Crimes and Chinese Justice* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2015).

Lamont-Brown, Raymond, *Kempetai: Japan's Dreaded Military Police* (Stroud: Sutton, 1998).

Linton, Suzannah (ed.), *Hong Kong's War Crimes Trials* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

Maga, Timothy, *Judgement at Tokyo: the Japanese War Crimes Trial* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2001).

Maynard, Roger, *Ambon: the Truth About One of the Most Brutal POW Camps in World War II and the Triumph of the Aussie Spirit* (Sydney: Hachette Military Collection, 2014).

McCormack, Gavin, 'Apportioning the Blame: Australian Trials for Railway Crimes', in Gavan McCormack and Hank Nelson (eds), *The Burma-Thailand Railway: Memory and History* (St Leonards, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 1993), pp. 85–119.

Mettraux, Guénaël, *The Law of Command Responsibility* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

Minear, Richard, *Victor's Justice: the Tokyo War Crimes Trial* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971).

Moore, Aaron William, 'An Insatiable Parasite: Eating and Drinking in WWII Armies of the Asia-Pacific Theatre (1937–1945)', in Katarzyna J. Cwiertka (ed.), *Food and War in Mid-Twentieth Century Asia* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), pp. 109–130.

Nelson, Hank, 'Measuring the Railway: From Individual Lives to National History', in Gavan McCormack and Hank Nelson (eds), *The Burma-Thailand Railway: Memory and History* (St Leonards, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 1993), pp. 10–26.

Parks, W.H., 'Command Responsibility for War Crimes', *Military Law Review*, Vol. 62 (1973), pp. 1–104.

Piccigallo, Philip R., *The Japanese on Trial: Allied War Crimes Operations in the Far East, 1945–1951* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1979).

Rowland, Robin, 'Command Ability and Command Responsibility: Lt. Col. Hirateru Banno and the "F Force" Trials' (Unpublished Masters Thesis, York University, 2003).

Sleeman, Colin (ed.), *Trial of Gozawa Sadaichi and Nine Others* (London: William Hodge and Company, 1948).

Tanaka, Yuki, Tim McCormack and Gerry Simpson (eds), *Beyond Victor's Justice: the Tokyo War Crimes Trial Revisited* (Leiden: Brill-Nijhoff, 2011).

Taucher, Paul, 'Command Responsibility at the Sandakan-Ranau War Crimes Trials' (Unpublished Honours Dissertation, Murdoch University, 2016).

Taucher, Paul, 'Escape From Justice: The Failed Prosecutions of Baron Takasaki Masamitsu', *War in History*, forthcoming [https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0968344518804839].

Totani, Yuma, *Justice in Asia and the Pacific Region 1945–1952: Allied War Crimes Prosecutions* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

Totani, Yuma, *The Tokyo War Crimes Trial: the Pursuit of Justice in the Wake of World War II* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2008).

Wilson, Sandra, Robert Cribb, Beatrice Trefalt and Dean Aszkielowicz, *Japanese War Criminals: the Politics of Justice After the Second World War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017).

CHAPTER 13

Captivity on the Home Front: Allied Prisoners of War in Fukuoka during the Second World War

Sarah Kovner

Abstract

Prisoner-of-war (POW) camps in Fukuoka are today infamous for Japanese brutality during the Second World War. But in 1945, some U.S. authorities judged that most Allied prisoners in Japan were treated in much the same way as Japan's own servicemen. Recent scholarship has revealed the full complexity of the POW experience across Japan's vast wartime empire, and challenged popular misconceptions that imagine a consistent policy of mistreating servicemen. But understanding what happened in Fukuoka is particularly important in establishing the nature and extent of Tokyo's culpability for the abuse that did occur. Unlike in newly conquered territories like Burma and the Philippines, these camps were directly under the War Minister's purview. What factors dictated the conditions of captivity in Fukuoka and the rest of Japan? How did POWs compare it to their experiences in other camps? What role did the camps play in Japan's war economy? And how did prisoners' situation change over the course of the conflict? This paper seeks to reconstruct the POW experience in the Fukuoka region by focusing on a particular camp and analysing it using evidence from multiple archives, including high-level War Ministry policy documents, the extensive record of the war crimes trials, and accounts written by prisoners from several countries.

Keywords

Prisoners of war – World War II – Pacific War – captivity – Japan – Fukuoka – wartime – captive – detention camps

'The Fukuokan camp was without question, excepting the hell ships, the worst experience of all'. So declared Capt. John Albert Goodpasture Jr, who was asked in 1946 to recount his experiences in multiple Japanese prisoner-of-war

©

(POW) camps.[1] The experience of POWs in Fukuoka remains infamous for Japanese brutality, including forced labour, insufficient provision of food and medicine and the execution of flyers. These experiences have led former Allied POWs, as well as Chinese and Korean forced labourers who worked at Asō Mining Company and Mitsubishi Mining Company, to organise and seek compensation.[2]

How then can we explain another post-war assessment, that of a Dutch POW? He said that his camp in Fukuoka was the most comfortable of all the places in which he had been held during the war, 'with its heated dining hall, beautiful bathroom, good camp direction, my many friends and its good food'.[3] After examining hundreds of accounts, Maj. Gen. Archer L. Lerch of the U.S. Provost Marshal General judged that 'in most established prisoner of war base camps in Japan Proper, Manchuria and Korea, the food ration authorized and the housing, medical service, and other facilities and services provided [to] prisoners of war were not far below the same type facilities and services authorized and officially provided personnel in the Japanese army'.[4]

This chapter analyses why accounts of the POW experience in Fukuoka are so sharply conflicting, and what factors explain why they varied between

1 'Checklist,' 29 March 1946, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland (hereafter NARA), found at http://mansell.com/pow-index.html. Goodpasture's account was a source for the 31 July 1946 Gibbs Report, 'Prisoner Of War Camps in Japan and Japanese Controlled Areas as Taken from Reports of Interned American Prisoners Liaison and Research Branch American Prisoner of War Information Bureau'. This document comes from the Roger Mansell collection, some of which is online and the remainder of which can be found at the Hoover Institution and Archives, Stanford University. It is critical to note that Goodpasture's account was given to an attorney to be used as prosecutorial evidence. For more on how to consider these kinds of documents please see Sandra Wilson, Robert Cribb, Beatrice Trefalt and Dean Aszkielowicz, *Japanese War Criminals: the Politics of Justice after the Second World War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017).

2 William Underwood, 'Names, Bones and Unpaid Wages (1): Reparations for Korean Forced Labor in Japan' (Part 1 of 2), *Asia-Pacific Journal: Japan Focus*, 4:9, https://apjjf.org/-William-Underwood/2219/article.html; Fujita Yukisa, 'Aso Mining's Indelible Past: Prime Minister Aso Should Seek Reconciliation With Former POWs', *Asia-Pacific Journal: Japan Focus*, 7:16; William Underwood, 'Mitsubishi, Historical Revisionism and Japanese Corporate Resistance to Chinese Forced Labor Redress,' *Asia-Pacific Journal: Japan Focus* 4:2.

3 J. Oosterhuis, Diary, 23 November 1944, Collectie 401, Dagboeken Nederlands-Indië N. 313.1, NIOD Instituut voor Oorlogs-, Holocaust- en Genocidestudies, Amsterdam. Oosterhuis wrote in his diary – written on Japanese-style paper and complete with cigarette and food wrappers – that he was held captive at Fukuoka, but he appears to have mistaken the location. The original is kept at the Museon in The Hague.

4 Maj. Gen. Archer Lerch, in Utsumi Aiko and Nagai Hitoshi, *Tōkyō saiban shiryō: Furyo jōhō-kyoku kankei bunsho* (Tōkyō: Gendai shiryō shuppan, 1999), 22 [p. 324 of Utsumi and Nagai].

camps and over the course of the conflict. Relevant matters include Ministry of War policies, the decisions of camp commanders about whether and how to implement them, and the conduct of junior officers and guards. The chapter also suggests that at least some of the captives might have resented and resisted any situation in which a people once considered inferior were now lords and masters over them.

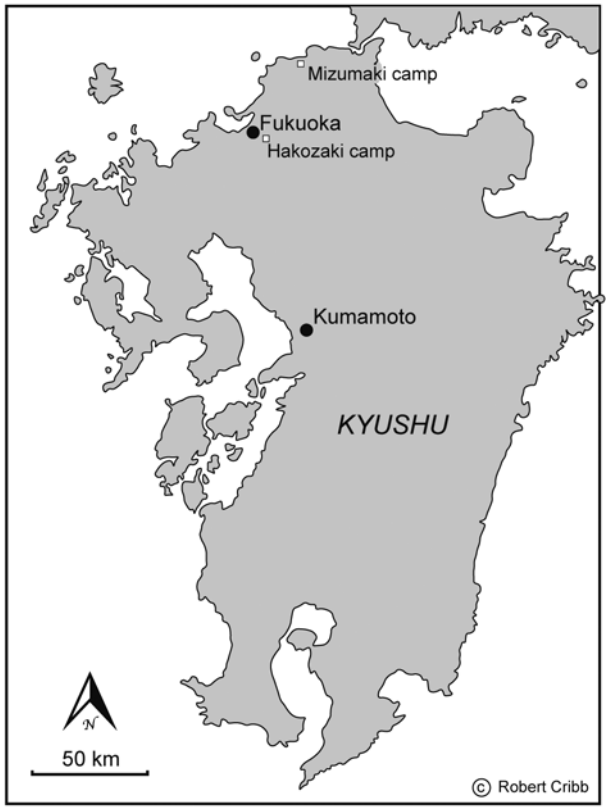
Japan itself experienced cataclysmic change over the course of the conflict, leading to widespread deprivation and fundamentally altering the context of Allied captivity. The War Ministry reconfigured its oversight of the POWs, establishing and then expanding offices charged with setting and implementing policy. And the POWs themselves – from many different places, and from different classes and ranks – were also changed by the experience of captivity. A more contextualized and comparative analysis helps explain the camps' notorious history.

The chapter follows groups of Allied POWs of many different nationalities as well as American civilians who spent time at one particular branch camp, Fukuoka 1. These captives came from Wake Island, Java, the Philippines, and other parts of Kyushu. Fukuoka 1 itself moved three times, and underwent various command regimes, like many other camps in Japan. But it was always under the purview of the Prisoner of War Management Office and the Prisoner of War Information Bureau in Tokyo. So what happened there can be compared with what Japanese policymakers prescribed.

The main reason POWs were brought to Japan, and to particular places in Japan, was to put them to work supporting the war economy. As more and more men went to fight, businesses and factories experienced labour shortages. The national government had already made efforts to improve the situation with the 1938 National Labour Mobilisation Law. But as more men were drafted, companies continued to face shortages. The government first sought to fill them with colonial labour. In 1939, approximately 85,000 Koreans were forcibly brought to Japan.[5] In 1941 authorities turned to women: the Patriotic National Labour Cooperation Ordinance required that unmarried women between fourteen and twenty-five join the Patriotic Labour Corps.[6] Yet the war economy required more and more workers.

5 Shunsuke Tsurumi, *An Intellectual History of Wartime Japan, 1931–1945* (London: KPI, 1986), p. 56.

6 Yoshiko Miyake, 'Doubling Expectations: Motherhood and Women's Factory Work under State Management in Japan in the 1930s and 1940s,' in Gail Lee Bernstein (ed.), *Recreating Japanese Women, 1600–1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), p. 288.



MAP 13.1
Fukuoka camps

The administrative camp, Fukuoka 1, was responsible for all camps in Kyushu, Japan's third biggest island. The Western District Army (Seibu hōmengun) ran the camps in Fukuoka. It controlled how POW labour was used. The Imperial Japanese Army set up 'branch' camps and smaller dispatch camps, and supplied them with food and clothing, except in the early period. Initially the Western District Army did not have the capacity to pay or manage a large number of POWs. It therefore delegated to factories the responsibility for guarding and paying them.[7] Dispatch camps were set up in 1943–1944 to address a lack of manpower. In dispatch camps, private companies provided housing and provisioned the guards and POWs and organised labour. Some branch camps also provided companies with labour: in Kyushu, many prisoners worked for mines or industrial groups.

7 Utsumi Aiko, *Nihongun no horyo seisaku* (Tōkyō: Aoki Shoten, 2005), pp. 190–194, 255–257, 327–334.

The Imperial Japanese Army opened branch camp Fukuoka 1 in the autumn of 1942 at Kumamoto, a former castle town in Kyushu.[8] The compound was one and a half acres, with wooden barracks surrounded by a wooden fence. In November 1942, approximately 260 British servicemen arrived in Fukuoka from West Java, on board the *Dai-nichi maru*. Once POWs arrived in Japan and were assigned to camps, they were under the command of the Chief of the Army General Staff, who in turn placed them under local army control.

The first POWs in Fukuoka were mainly from the Royal Air Force 21st Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment, and had been captured during the Battle of Java and temporarily held in Singapore. Among them were 23 officers, the most senior being Lt. Col. Martin D.S. Saunders. The British prisoners would be under the charge of Capt. Sakamoto Yuhichi. He was average height for a Japanese man during this time (5ft 6 inches or 1.68 meters), but struck the prisoners as short and solid. He commanded 22 guards, who led their captives to wooden huts. Some POWs found the huts inadequately constructed and leaky. But hygiene and sanitation was 'fairly reasonable,' according to one former wood machinist.[9] These first prisoners would also receive two sets of clothing. For food they would be given a large cupful of steamed rice and about half a pint of vegetable soup three times per day.[10]

Bombardier Robert Metcalf, a former groceryman, found the food to be 'poor quality'.[11] He and the other POWs were supposed to receive supplementary food from the Red Cross.[12] Accounts differ on how Red Cross supplies were divided and how they were used. One captive recalled an issue of Red Cross supplies while he was a prisoner at Kumamoto, where he received 'half a tin of condensed milk and a quarter of an apple pudding'. Additionally, three tins of corned beef per man were added to cookhouse supplies at Fukuoka 1.

---

8 Established as Kumamoto Branch Camp of Yawata Temporary POW Camp at Aza-Saburotsuka, Kengun-cho, Kumamoto City, Kumamoto Prefecture on 26 November 1942.

9 Robert Metcalf, 'In the Matter of War Crimes Committed by Japanese Nationals and in the Matter of Ill-treatment of Prisoners of War at Kumamoto Prisoner of War Camp', from the Center for Research on Allied POWs under the Japanese: http://mansell.com/pow-index.html.

10 Arthur Edward Chalkey, 'Perpetuation of Testimony', JAG War Crimes Case File, Records of the Office of the Judge Advocate General (Army), RG 153, NARA.

11 Metcalf, 'In the Matter of War Crimes'.

12 Although the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) was supposed to visit all Japanese POW camps, they visited only a small number. ICRC representatives never visited Fukuoka 1, although they visited the camps in the Fukuoka region three times from 1942 to1945. War Office, 'Report', 5 May 1944, FO 916/1095/1944, (UK) National Archives, Kew.

Every two weeks, captives received half a cup of sugar and cocoa.[13] One captive recalled that men received boots from the Red Cross. But they were not allowed to wear them to work. Instead, they were only to be worn in camp at night and on rest days. It is not clear why, but it may be that Capt. Sakamoto did not want people to see that POWs had new boots when so many Japanese civilians were struggling.

But these Red Cross supplies only came later. In the meantime, many of the POWs were already in bad shape when they arrived in Fukuoka. During the first five months at the camp, the hospital was practically always full, with as many as seventy men suffering from diarrhoea. The hospital building was small and very poorly heated, so there were equally as many seriously ill in the barracks. Thirty-seven died in the hospital in the first month. Prisoners found medical supplies inadequate. They consisted of what was left when the men had been captured, and later a small quantity of Japanese medicine. For beriberi, Japanese medication – 'Wakomoto tablets' – were supplied, but at the price of two yen for a small bottle of 200 tablets.[14] Some of the medicine on hand was no better than placebos, at least according to an account by an American prisoner who arrived in January 1945. He noted that 'For the most part the medicines were stale and unusable'.[15]

It is hard to assess who was responsible for this situation. Col. William North reported that 'When the Japanese medical officer would prescribe medicine, the Japanese medical orderly [medical officer] Hata would delay filling the prescription and issuing the medicine'.[16] Lt.-Col. Saunders, on the other hand, judged that Hata was initially 'fairly decent' and only later became 'very hostile'.[17] It does not appear that the Japanese were uniformly indifferent to the fate of the POWs. For instance, the most seriously ill servicemen were sent to the Military Hospital in Fukuoka to receive more intensive care.

13 E. Vesey, Affidavit, 'In the Matter of War Crimes Committed by Japanese Nationals and in the Treatment of Prisoners of War at No. 1. Subcamp, Prisoner of War Camp, Fukuoka, Island of Kyūshū, Japan', from the Center for Research on Allied POWs under the Japanese: http://mansell.com/pow-index.html.

14 Ibid.

15 Col. William D. North, 'Perpetuation of Testimony of William D. North, Colonel, 017345', 28 June 1946, http://www.mansell.com/pow_resources/camplists/fukuoka/fuk_01_fukuoka/fukuoka_01/USAffJ-P.htm#North.

16 Ibid.

17 Frederick Chilton, 'In the Matter of Japanese War Crimes and in the Matter of the Ill-Treatment of Prisoners of War at Fukuoka Camp', 23 May 1946, JAG War Crimes Case File, Records of the Office of the Judge Advocate General (Army), RG 153, NARA.

Moreover, POWs in Fukuoka 1 were not initially forced to work when they were ill, as would occur later. The Mancunian Metcalf worked in the cookhouse for the first six months, before being hospitalised. Subsequently he joined the other captives in building an aerodrome, located about half a mile from the camp. Lt. Col. Saunders dug trenches alongside the others, whether voluntarily or not. The Geneva Conventions strictly regulated the use of POW labour; work which either contributed to the war effort or was degrading to the prisoner was outlawed. The application of the regulations, however, depended on several interpretations: did working in scrap iron contribute to manufacturing tanks? Exactly what was undesirable or 'degrading'?[18] In Japan as in the United States, captives' labour helped outfit troops.[19] But Saunders judged that 'We were not unreasonably hard worked'.[20]

All in all, concluded Saunders, 'general conditions were fairly reasonable as judged by Japanese standards'. Even so, he had only harsh words for the Commandant, focussing his ire on practices that he found personally humiliating. He judged Sakamoto 'an uneducated man of a brutal and callous temperament'. But it was the interpreter, Katsura Takeo, who was the 'undisputed power behind the throne'. Saunders accused the two of being 'entirely responsible' for the 'beatings and indignities to which men in their camps were subjected'.[21]

Many of the POWs, in Fukuoka as elsewhere, describe being slapped or beaten, though usually after disciplinary infractions – often quite minor. These beatings usually came at the hands of Katsura or the guard Horsumi, according to Saunders.[22] Galixtro Garcia was beaten for almost three and a half hours for possessing a penknife.[23] David Adams was severely beaten by Sakamoto

18 U.S. policy was outlined in 'The War Department Policy with Respect to Labor of Prisoners of War', published 10 January 1943: Arnold Krammer, *Nazi Prisoners of War in America* (Briarcliff Manor: Stein and Day, 1979), p. 81.

19 Among other jobs, German POWs in the U.S. picked cotton and worked in foundries and mines. Krammer, *Nazi Prisoners of War in America*, pp. 88–94.

20 'Saunders Preliminary Report on POW camps in which Certain Allied Personnel have Spent 3½ yrs Captivity', 8 September 1945, from the Center for Research on Allied POWs under the Japanese: http://mansell.com/pow_resources/camplists/fukuoka/fuk_01_fukuoka/fukuoka_01/Saunders_report_1945-09-08.pdf.

21 Lt. Col. Martin Dustan Sedgwick Saunders, 'Perpetuation of Testimony', JAG War Crimes Case File, Records of the Office of the Judge Advocate General (Army), RG 153, NARA.

22 Lt. Col. Martin Dustan Sedgwick Saunders, 'Preliminary Report on P.O.W. Camps in Which Certain Allied Personnel Have Spent 3½ Years Captivity,' 8 September 1945, http://mansell.com/pow_resources/camplists/fukuoka/fuk_01_fukuoka/fukuoka_01/Saunders_report_1945-09-08.pdf.

23 Galixtro Garcia, 'Perpetuation of Testimony', JAG War Crimes Case File, Records of the Office of the Judge Advocate General (Army), RG 153, NARA.

and given five days in a cell just for taking a corncob while working on the aerodrome. POWs were made to count off in Japanese, and if one could not do so, he was sometimes slapped in the face.[24]

What Saunders found particularly intolerable was his treatment as an officer, namely the way in which officers and men were treated equally. Worse, 'Not only were we treated exactly like the men but all of us were treated like the lowest Japanese privates'. He could not stand how 'he and other officers were required to salute [the] lowest Japanese soldier down to [the] latest joined recruit'.[25]

But when Saunders compared his treatment to that of the 'lowest Japanese private', he implicitly acknowledged that face-slapping was common in the Japanese Army. Actually, men in the Japanese Army may have considered it preferable to the alternative. Lt. Gen. Hamada Hiroshi, future chief of the Prisoner of War Bureau, touched on the issue in a POW camp directors' meeting in 1943. He described these ad-hoc punishments as a 'traditional bad army practice' and attributed them to flaws of Japanese culture. Hamada may have considered it a 'bad army practice', but evidence suggests Japanese soldiers on the ground disagreed. Unofficial punishment, like face-slapping, was better than criminal punishment, which would disgrace one's name and family. Hamada implicitly confirmed that ordinary military personnel took a different attitude when he attributed this kind of practice not to official policy, but to the behaviour of low rank army men and hired guards (*koyōnin*).[26]

Manpower shortages in the army meant that wounded veterans were recruited to staff temporary camps run by the companies. They may have resented the men whose compatriots had hurt them.[27] These Japanese non-commissioned officers and hired guards would likely have had little, if any, contact with Europeans and Americans before they were given responsibility for POWs, increasing the risk that cultural misunderstandings and language barriers would lead to punishment (*shiteki seisai*).[28] On the other hand, the British Army and Americans previously stationed in the Philippines had generally

24 Lt. Col. Martin Dustan Sedgwick Saunders, 'In the Matter of Japanese War Crimes and the Matter of No. 1 Sub Camp, Fukuoka Area', http://mansell.com/pow_resources/camplists/fukuoka/fuk_01_fukuoka/fukuoka_01/Page03.htm#Saunders.

25 Saunders, 'In the Matter of Japanese War Crimes and the Matter of No. 1 Sub Camp, Fukuoka Area'.

26 Utsumi, *Nihongun no horyo seisaku*, pp. 296–297.

27 Chozo [Tadashi] Odashima, 'The Investigation Report Concerning the Handling of POW in the POW Camps in Japan Proper', SCAP Legal Section, Administrative Division, Miscellaneous Japanese File 1942–8 POW Camp Records, Records of Allied Operational and Occupation Headquarters, RG 331, NARA.

28 Utsumi, *Nihongun no horyo seisaku*, pp. 296–297.

only encountered Asians in a colonial context, and almost never in positions of authority. Some of them considered face-slapping or beatings by Japanese to be the worst form of humiliation. Many did not come to the camps with high regard for the Japanese in general and found it difficult to understand – literally – what was expected of them.

One of the challenges the guards faced at camps like Fukuoka 1 was that they had to move and move again, at the same time as new POWs – accustomed to different camps – would come and go. In the autumn of 1943, authorities moved Fukuoka 1 to Tatara-cho (Kashii), in suburban Fukuoka, where the 230 men from Kumamoto were joined by another seventy-four American, British, and Dutch captives.[29] Fukuoka 1 moved once again in April 1944. Now it was located within a city, Ōaza Mushiroda, alongside an airport. Some prisoners called it Hirao, after its address (Higashi Hirao 3-chōme). The camp was located at the foot of the hills surrounding the airfield, but outside the airfield's boundaries. It was supposed to be a summer camp for light work. Some of the POWs worked as mechanics on planes, or on trucks used to haul building supplies. Others constructed airfield bomb shelters. Still others mined coal and later worked at a lumberyard near the camp.

The same month Fukuoka 1 moved to Ōaza Mushiroda, about one hundred American civilian contractors who had been captured on Wake Island were transferred to the camp.[30] The new captives included physically weak men, and hospital cases. Under international law, civilians should not have been kept in POW camps, but in fact this practice was not uncommon.[31] In May and June 1944, Dutch and Malayan POWs arrived. The British identified them as 'mostly natives'.[32] The Dutch came mainly from other camps in Fukuoka, where conditions seemed much worse to them. At Fukuoka 6, Dutch POWs mined coal for Takamatsu mining company, later Nippon Mining Company. At Fukuoka 17 (Ōmuta), prisoners mined coal at the Miike mine for Mitsui.

Dutch serviceman J. Oosterhuis recorded his experience in his diary. In summer and autumn 1944, Oosterhuis was held at Fukuoka 6B in Mizumaki, a

29 Accounts disagree on when the move happened, probably because the official move happened earlier than the POWs actually moved. For example, according to the POW Research Network, the camp moved in September 1943. According to POWs such as Lt-Col. Martin Saunders, the move occurred in November. http://www.powresearch.jp/en/archive/camplist/index.html#fukuoka; Saunders, 'Perpetuation of Testimony'.

30 Saunders, 'Preliminary Report'; Walter A. Kostecki, 'Deposition', JAG War Crimes Case File, Records of the Office of the Judge Advocate General (Army), RG 153, NARA.

31 Felicia Yap, 'Prisoners of War and Civilian Internees of the Japanese in British Asia: The Similarities and Contrasts of Experience', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 47, no. 2 (2012), pp. 317–346. 'Affidavit', RG 153, Box 1023, NARA.

32 Kostecki, 'Deposition'; Saunders, 'Perpetuation of Testimony'.

notorious camp where the labour consisted of mining coal. Many died there, and, after an escape attempt, an Australian was allegedly murdered. Oosterhuis recorded that he was imprisoned for two and a half days in an 'eiso,' a 2.5 x 2.5m cell without windows or furniture. Initially he was actually happy just to be fed, and to be away from the Japanese. 'Then it felt like torture because it was so cold, boring and uncomfortable'.[33]

Perhaps unsurprisingly, a constant topic of conversation among POWs was which camp was the best. The most common answer was none. Oosterhuis wrote that some 'have been defeated by the terrible cold', and were inclined to forget all of the horrors inflicted upon them in previous camps. But Oosterhuis observed that there were big differences between a camp like 6B and some of the others, which he actually recalled with real nostalgia on his arrival at Moji: 'I wish I was still in our comfortable 9th camp....[Now] we're living in a large stone Y.M.C.A.-building here, not as cold as the wooden barracks, but no heating either. There is a beautiful dining room though, and an even more beautiful heater, which seems to be only for show'.

On 25 July 1944, Dick Mouravieff of the International Red Cross informed Geneva via cable that POW health was taken into account when assigning work at Fukuoka 6B, that both hymn books and (Communion) wafers were distributed, and that 'POWs treatment regarding army same as Japanese army',[34] meaning that the Japanese army treated POWs in the same way it treated its own servicemen.

The Swedish were the Protecting Power for Dutch civilians in Japan. So it was the Swedish Minister in Tokyo, Widar Bagge, who visited camp No. 11 on behalf of Dutch interests.[35] Fukuoka no. 11, located near a coal mine, held 389 POWs, of whom 147, or just under forty percent, were Dutch. Bagge found that the POWs were continuously losing weight and strength, though the camp boasted a vegetable garden, eight goats and ten chickens (the goat milk was just for the hospital). According to Japanese authorities, a doctor from the Mitsui Mining Company visited the captives daily in the mines. They needed medicine, such as the antibiotics sulfapyridin and sulfathisol, and worried about the cold and

33 Oosterhuis, 'Diary,' 23 Nov. 1944, pp. 192–197.

34 Telegram from Mouravieff to Geneva, 25 July 1944, G876/vii – June–September 1944, ICRC Archives, Geneva, Switzerland.

35 'Report on Visit to Sub-camp no. 11 of Fukuoka War Prisoners Camp, July 27th, 1944', Nationaal Archief, The Hague. Like many camps, Sub-camp no. 11 was referred to by several numbers. Today POWs and Japanese scholars refer to it as Camp no. 8. Located near Yamano coal mine, it was called Camp no. 11 from April 1944 to August 1945.

the lack of protein. Four had died: one from pneumonia, and three from intestinal disease.[36]

Bagge found that although morale 'on the whole could be considered good', it was nevertheless true that 'a few of the men seem unable to stand the strain and let themselves go in spite of their stronger comrades' attempts to help them'. He believed that this was due to unaccustomed hard work. But the prisoners were also concerned about their families in the Netherlands Indies. Neither were they allowed newspapers as 'these might have a disturbing influence on the prisoners' minds'. They could not even read books, since all of the ones in camp were in English. On a later inspection, Bagge found the look of the prisoners 'rather gloomy and not very satisfactory'.

When Oosterhuis, together with forty-four other men, was moved to another Fukuoka camp in December 1944, he was struck by the intense cold – zero degrees Celsius. But otherwise his first impressions on arrival were good. For instance, the only work was 'an hour of messing around' a day.[37] But Oosterhuis observed that as many as twenty-five percent of the captives were sick: as noted above, the facility had been built as a summer camp. Captives waited to move to a winter camp six kilometers (3.7 miles) away, which they themselves would build.

In a diary entry dated 20 December 1944, Oosterhuis recorded that 104 Canadian Red Cross packages arrived. These were to be saved until Christmas. After the butter and cheese had been sent to the hospital and the meat and fish to the kitchen, what remained was sent to the barracks: one can of powdered milk, one box of raisins, one bar of milk chocolate, one small bag of salt and pepper, one jar of jam, one small bag of sugar (about 250 grams), one box of cream crackers, and one box of tea bags. Oosterhuis recorded that another 670 American Red Cross packages arrived the next day, but does not say how the contents were distributed. He commented that the food was 'slightly better and more copious', but altogether not very different from the previous camp. In the same month, Red Cross representatives met with prisoners' representatives, who requested clothes, shoes, medicine and letters from home.[38]

On Christmas Day, camp officials handed out goods from the Red Cross.[39] That left the prisoners with one box of raisins (or prunes), one box of cheese, three cans of 'so-called cheesebutter', half a can of powdered milk, one

36 Ibid.
37 Oosterhuis, 'Diary,' 20 December 1944, pp. 198–204.
38 Oosterhuis, 'Diary,' 20 December 1944, pp. 198–204.
39 Ibid., 1 January 1945, pp. 204–205.

hundred sugar cubes, two bars of vitamin chocolate, one can of coffee, one jar of jam, one can of liver pâté, two cans of pork pie and five and a half packs of cigarettes. Oosterhuis does not say how many prisoners shared these supplies.

To read his account, it would seem Oosterhuis spent much of his time not working, but simply being cold, eating, and sleeping.[40] But on 18 January 1945, the new camp at Hakozaki was finally finished. Prisoners moved to the camp while carrying their luggage, walking ninety minutes through a blizzard. It was situated along the bank of the Ubi river, and immediately below the Kagoshima railway. Subsequently, Hakozaki moved yet again within Fukuoka City. For some prisoners who had started out in Fukuoka 1, this was their third move. But the new camp looked much more comfortable. It was built under trees and the barracks had wooden walls. It was within a grove of pine trees – perhaps for protection from bombing raids.

A large new contingent of Americans, including Captain Goodpasture, Carl Engelhart, and Jack Schwartz, arrived at Hakozaki in the dead of winter 1945. They included 193 men who had been captured in the Philippines almost three years earlier.[41] At this point, there were hundreds of prisoners at Hakozaki – Americans, British, Dutch, Australians, Norwegians, Canadians, South Africans and New Zealanders as well as Indonesian, Malay, and Chinese captives.[42] Engelhart reported that British men of the 'other ranks' greeted them. To the British, the Americans seemed like 'walking skeletons'.[43] They arrived by truck after a four-hour train trip from Moji. British escorts helped them out of trucks and into the barracks.[44]

On arrival, the Americans had tea with sugar and 'lugao' (a Filipino term for rice mush with salmon). They were each given a pile of seven blankets, according to one source. Each barracks had a stove that gave at least 'the illusion of warmth'. They could have a bath each day. And the men learned they would also receive long underwear and an overcoat.[45]

According to Engelhart, a Japanese-speaking G-2 (intelligence) officer, prisoners ate regular meals, and received Red Cross parcels once a month. These

40 Ibid., 4 September 1945, pp. 206–208.

41 Saunders, 'Preliminary Report'.

42 As of 15 August 1945 Fukuoka 1 held 381 captives, both POWs and civilians (the civilians were mostly American contractors from Wake):140 British, 153 Americans, 58 Dutch, 28 Australians, 1 Norwegian, and 1 Canadian: 'List of Hukuoka Camp Strength as of August 15, 1945', SCAP Legal Section, Administrative Division, Miscellaneous Japanese File, Records of Allied Operational and Occupation Headquarters, RG 331, NARA.

43 'Saunders Affidavit', Entry 143, Box 1035, RG 153, NARA.

44 E. Carl Engelhart, unpublished manuscript, p. 242. The E. Carl Engelhart Papers, 1950. U.S Army Heritage & Education Center, Carlisle, PA.

45 Ibid., 245.

parcels included cigarettes. But Capt. William Fossey, from Oklahoma, remembered the Red Cross parcels differently: 'It is well known that Japanese would not give us Red Cross parcels sent to us from the States. They would rob packages of cigarettes, food, etc.' Supplies were low: 'They denied us the bare necessities of food, medicine, clothing and warmth'.[46]

So how do we explain the existence of different accounts from soldiers belonging to the same unit, on a specific question like the distribution of Red Cross parcels? In this case, it appears that the situation may have changed over time, and that the difference was partly attributable to the actions of a particular Japanese doctor, 1st Lt Danno Kazuo. An American sergeant in the Medical Department, Dr James Robert McIntosh, originally identified Lt Danno as the camp doctor from February 1945 until May 1945.[47] Until Danno's arrival, McIntosh claimed, food supplies were inventoried and held for sick POWs. But Danno allowed Japanese personnel to eat them, as he himself did. He stopped providing daily food and medicine to POWs and instead distributed supplies once every 10–14 days.

McIntosh 'personally saw Danno eating food, which came from Red Cross parcels, while holding sick call for POWs'. 'Almost every day, when I cleaned out Danno's office', McIntosh reported, 'I would find wrappers and empty cans which had once contained Red Cross food supplies. To my knowledge, this condition did not occur prior to the arrival of Danno'. Moreover, 'Danno would not excuse a POW from work unless he had an extremely high temperature or had a visible external injury'.[48]

It is hard to assess how many American POWs would have survived at this point with better food and medical care. As we have seen, many were sick when they arrived at Fukuoka 1, and they already looked like 'skeletons'. Engelhart observed: 'It was too late for some of our comrades'.[49] Altogether fifty-three Americans died in the three months following their arrival.

Certainly by this point, the last few months of the war, punishment was no longer restricted to face-slapping or beatings because of rule-breaking. Many of the guards were breaking the rules by stealing from prisoners and beating POWs who reported them. During roll call, the civilian guards would ransack

46 William J. Fossey to Paul Geissler, 'Crimes and Atrocities Committed by Japanese on American Prisoners of War', [Notarized], 25 September 1946, http://mansell.com/pow_resources/camplists/fukuoka/fuk_01_fukuoka/fukuoka_01/USAffD-H.htm#Fossey.

47 'Perpetuation of the Testimony of James Robert McIntosh, in the Matter of the Atrocities Committed by the Japanese to Allied Interned POWs', Entry 143, Box 1035, RG 153, NARA.

48 James R. McIntosh, 'Affidavit', 18 August 1947, JAG War Crimes Case File, Records of the Office of the Judge Advocate General (Army), RG 153, NARA.

49 Engelhart, unpublished manuscript, p. 245.

the POW quarters and steal articles. If the prisoners reported them, they were beaten. Some did not participate, like Matsunaga Shigenori.[50] But 'Buck tooth' (Honda) always did. Henry Forsberg accused 'Buck tooth' of killing a man and noted 'he was continually beating the men'.[51]

In Fukuoka 1, like many other camps, it was the interpreter, in this case Katsura, who was the most prominent and visible face of the enemy. Even the camp commander was never seen by many POWs. Katsura, on the other hand, personally oversaw the formal punishment of POWs for alleged infractions. American Col. William D. North himself had been slapped by Katsura. 'Katsura slapped me without provocation, and quite severely'.[52] He had also reported hearing from Captain Kostecki that 'Katsura beat an American to death in the camp'.[53] William J. Fossey remembered Katsura as being particularly cruel. 'This sergeant had spent much time in the United States before the war, spoke good English, but was mean by nature'.[54]

Already, at the end of 1944, the Home Minister in Tokyo had warned the War Minister that citizens were complaining that POWs were getting better treatment than they were.[55] Following the Great Tokyo Air Raid in March 1945, in which approximately 100,000 Japanese perished, the U.S. Army Air Corps began systematically firebombing smaller cities all across the country. Essential workers were barred from leaving the cities, even though they lacked shelter. Only farmers now had adequate food as the government experimented with new sources of nutrition, such as dolphins and silkworms. A seven-day work-week was now standard, tuberculosis was on the rise, and even boys and girls as young as twelve were put to work in the fields or as janitors. Throughout Japan there was a serious shortage of shoes, clothing, and coal.[56]

---

50 McIntosh, 'Affidavit'.

51 Henry Forsberg, 'Perpetuation of Testimony', JAG War Crimes Case File, Records of the Office of the Judge Advocate General (Army), RG 153, NARA.

52 Col. William D. North, 'Perpetuation of Testimony of William D. North, Colonel, 017345', 28 June 1946, http://www.mansell.com/pow_resources/camplists/fukuoka/fuk_01_fukuoka/fukuoka_01/USAffJ-P.htm#North.

53 Ibid.

54 Willam J. Fossey to Paul Geissler, 25 September 1946, 'Crimes and Atrocities Committed by Japanese on American Prisoners of War', http://mansell.com/pow_resources/camplists/fukuoka/fuk_01_fukuoka/fukuoka_01/USAffD-H.htm#Fossey.

55 'Affidavit of Odashima Tadashi', 30 January 1948, WOT Doc. #11104, SCAP Legal Section, Administrative Division, Miscellaneous Japanese File 1942–8 POW Camp Records, Records of Allied Operational and Occupation Headquarters, RG 331, NARA.

56 'Current Intelligence Study Number 19', OSS, R&A Branch, 18 May 1945, https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/DOC_0000709790.pdf.

By this point, most of the Americans at Fukuoka 1, including Schwartz, Englehart and Goodpasture, had shipped off to a comparatively comfortable camp in Korea. In June 1945, the POW Information Bureau in Tokyo reported that there were 399 POWs left in Fukuoka 1.[57]

As much as POWs hated the beatings and punishment Katsura and the guards inflicted on them, they were not the greatest threat of death or injury by 1945. Instead, it was bombing by U.S. Army Air Corps B-29s. 'Almost every day they would come over and bomb us', Ellis recalled. 'We weren't permitted to get in any foxholes or anything. We had to just stand there and watch our men get killed by bombs'.[58] 'Our whole camp was bombed and burned', as Moss later reported. All the men sick in the barracks at the time were lost.[59]

The fact that Fukuoka 1 was located directly alongside an airfield made the danger from bombing particularly great. Airfields in Kyushu were high priority targets before and during the battle of Okinawa. The POWs were not exempt because, in most cases, the Japanese did not mark their barracks as POW camps. Perhaps the most unfortunate POWs of all were those at Fukuoka 2, in the Port of Nagasaki, and camp no. 14 (Fukushima), located 1.6 kilometres from ground zero at the site of the atomic bombing. Ten sick POWs who remained in the building died when the atomic bomb was dropped on 9 August 1945. Altogether, thirty-five air raids hit POW camps in 1945. An estimated 318 POWs died, and 591 were injured.[60]

It is difficult to know how many captives passed through Fukuoka 1, and where they came from. But the majority were American, then Dutch, then British. Of the Americans, most were navy, then army, then members of the merchant marine.[61] A small number were civilians (the Wake Island contractors).

---

57 Huryojohokyoku, 'Personnel of Detainees in POW Camps', in Strahler, letter to ICRC, 11 October 1945, G8/76/xi September to December 1945, ICRC Archives.

58 Burton C. Ellis, 'Affidavit', 5 December 1946, http://mansell.com/pow_resources/camplists/fukuoka/fuk_01_fukuoka/fukuoka_01/USAffD-H.htm#Ellis.

59 Edwin B. Moss, 'Perpetuation of Testimony', 20 August 1946, http://www.mansell.com/pow_resources/camplists/fukuoka/fuk_01_fukuoka/fukuoka_01/USAffJ-P.htm#North.

60 Tachikawa Kyoichi, 'The Treatment of Prisoners of War by the Imperial Japanese Army and Navy Focusing on the Pacific War', *NIDS Security Reports*, no. 9 (2008), p. 59.

61 Based on limited data from NARA, the Dutch National Archives, Mansell, and Findmypast. World War II Prisoners of War Data File, 12/7/1941–11/19/1946, Records of World War II Prisoners of War, created 1942–1947, documenting the period 12/7/1941–11/19/1946 – Record Group 38, NARA; http://www.gahetna.nl/en/collectie/index/nt00425/view/NT00425_Japanseinterneringskaarten/q/zoekterm/%22No.%202%20Branch%20camp%22%20and%20Fukuoka/q/comments/1/page_size/50,Mansell,http://www.mansell.com/pow_resources/camplists/fukuoka/fuk_01_fukuoka/FUK-01_Rosters_1946-02-16.pdf; https://www.findmypast.co.uk/search/results?datasetname=prisoners+of+war

By the end of the war in 1945, Fukuoka 1 held approximately 650 POWs and internees: 250 British, 150 Americans, 120 Dutch, and 100 Australians, as well as a smaller numbers of Canadians and Filipinos, and one Norwegian.[62]

The cruelty and chaos in Japan's POW camps reflected what was going on all across the country. Especially in the last months of the war, POWs were denied adequate food, but so too were Japanese civilians, so much so that children of this generation were literally stunted by malnutrition.[63] POWs were made to work, sometimes under tough conditions, but so too were Japanese of all ages. Guards abused their authority and brutally punished any sign of disobedience, but so did local Japanese officials, who attacked civilians daring to resist orders. POWs were often on the move, in temporary or inadequate housing. But so too were many Japanese civilians, as their homes were systematically destroyed by bombing or to create firebreaks.

The poor treatment of POWs once they arrived in Fukuoka was not mainly due to Ministry of War policies. To some extent, camp commanders were responsible, but they mostly functioned as distant figures. Corporal punishment was literally at the hands of junior officers and guards. From their point of view, it was a response to violations of camp rules by Allied captives. POWs, for their part, clearly resented being subject to Japanese soldiers. But the worst episodes in the Fukuoka camps were not emblematic of the entire POW experience. They instead reflected the suffering and chaos that was occurring outside the gates, and the feelings among many Japanese as their homeland was systematically destroyed. Most POWs were not directly exposed to the same level of danger as Japanese people were. But even for them, the situation was incredibly fluid, changeable, and capricious. That was part of the reason that POW life was so demoralising.

References

Dower, John W., *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of WWII* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co./The New Press, 1999).

Fujita Yukisa, 'Aso Mining's Indelible Past: Prime Minister Aso Should Seek Reconciliation with Former POWs', *Asia-Pacific Journal Japan Focus* 7:16.

+1715-1945&eventyear=1941&eventyear_offset=5&country=japan&databasetitle=world+war+2.

62 http://www.powresearch.jp/en/archive/camplist/index.html.

63 John W. Dower, *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of WWII* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co./The New Press, 1999), p. 92.

Krammer, Arnold, *Nazi Prisoners of War in America* (Briarcliff Manor: Stein and Day, 1979).

Miyake, Yoshiko, 'Doubling Expectations: Motherhood and Women's Factory Work under State Management in Japan in the 1930s and 1940s', in Gail Lee Bernstein (ed.), *Recreating Japanese Women, 1600–1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991.

Tachikawa, Kyoichi, 'The Treatment of Prisoners of War by the Imperial Japanese Army and Navy Focusing on the Pacific War', *NIDS Security Reports*, no. 9 (2008).

Tsurumi, Shunsuke, *An Intellectual History of Wartime Japan, 1931–1945* (London: KPI, 1986)

Underwood, William, 'Names, Bones and Unpaid Wages (1): Reparations for Korean Forced Labor in Japan' (Part 1 of 2), *Asia-Pacific Journal Japan Focus* 4: 9 https://apjjf.org/-William-Underwood/2219/article.html

Underwood, William, 'Mitsubishi, Historical Revisionism and Japanese Corporate Resistance to Chinese Forced Labor Redress', *Asia-Pacific Journal Japan Focus* 4:2.

Utsumi Aiko, *Nihongun no horyo seisaku* (Tōkyō: Aoki shoten, 2005).

Utsumi Aiko and Nagai Hitoshi, *Tōkyō saiban shiryō: Furyo jōhōkyoku kankei bunsho* (Tōkyō: Gendai shiryō shuppan, 1999).

Wilson, Sandra, Robert Cribb, Beatrice Trefalt and Dean Aszkielowicz, *Japanese War Criminals: The Politics of Justice after the Second World War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017).

Yap, Felicia, 'Prisoners of War and Civilian Internees of the Japanese in British Asia: The Similarities and Contrasts of Experience', *Journal of Contemporary History* 47, no. 2 (2012), pp. 317–346.

CHAPTER 14

Gender and Politics in the U.S. Army's Detention of Female Prisoners of War during the Korean Conflict

Grace J. Chae

Abstract

The Korean War is best known as the seminal battleground of the Cold War between the Soviet Union and the United States. However, it was also a civil struggle between factions with differing visions of a post-colonial Korea. This latter feature is most pronounced in studies on the detention of Korean male prisoners of war (POWs) in U.S. custody. As POW captures increased after MacArthur's 'Inch'ŏn landing', so, too, did the complexity of the population. Military intelligence discovered that Korean prisoners not only consisted of North Korean People's Army (NKPA) soldiers, but there were also southern and northern refugees, as well as Republic of Korea soldiers and civilians who willingly joined or were forcibly conscripted into the NKPA. As the armistice negotiations intensified on the issue of voluntary repatriation, conditions in the camps grew uncertain and increasingly violent. Amid this narrative lies the fragmented story of 700 Korean female POWs. Although their experiences in many ways parallel those of their male peers, their story also reveals an ambivalence on the part of their American captors, providing further insights into the role that gender, race, and politics played in the U.S. military's detention of POWs during the Korean War.

Keywords

Korean War – U.S. military – female prisoners of war – female soldiers – Koje Island – prisoner of war (POW) treatment – Dodd incident – Korean armistice negotiations – voluntary repatriation in Korea – detention camps

During the three years of armed conflict between the United Nations (UN) Forces, which were led by the United States, and the North Korean and Chinese Communist armies during the Korean War, the U.S. Army captured and

©

detained 170,183 prisoners of war (POWs).[1] In a war that was both international and civil in nature, the Korean prisoner population was a complex mixture of northern and southern Koreans who had willingly joined the North Korean People's Army (NKPA), had been forcibly conscripted, or had simply been caught up in the chaos. The situation for these prisoners was later complicated by arguments over repatriation at the armistice negotiations, which contributed to growing tensions within the POW camps. This chapter considers one overlooked category of Korean War POWs in U.S. custody: Korean women. I not only provide a substantive history of their experience, but also reveal how the U.S. military, in managing female POWs, struggled to reconcile gendered assumptions about docile female behaviour with the combative realities of war.

1 The Korean War Begins

Although North Korea's advance across the 38th parallel on 25 June 1950 has been commonly marked as the start of the Korean War, it was rather an extension of rising tensions that began with Korea's liberation from Japanese colonial control in 1945. Drawing upon U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt's paternalistic suggestion that countries newly liberated from colonial rule should be placed under trusteeships, American leaders divided the country along the 38th latitudinal line. They subordinated the northern zone to the Soviet Union and the southern zone to the United States. As a result, Koreans across the parallel experienced different post-colonial transitions under trustees that endorsed competing politico-economic ideologies.[2]

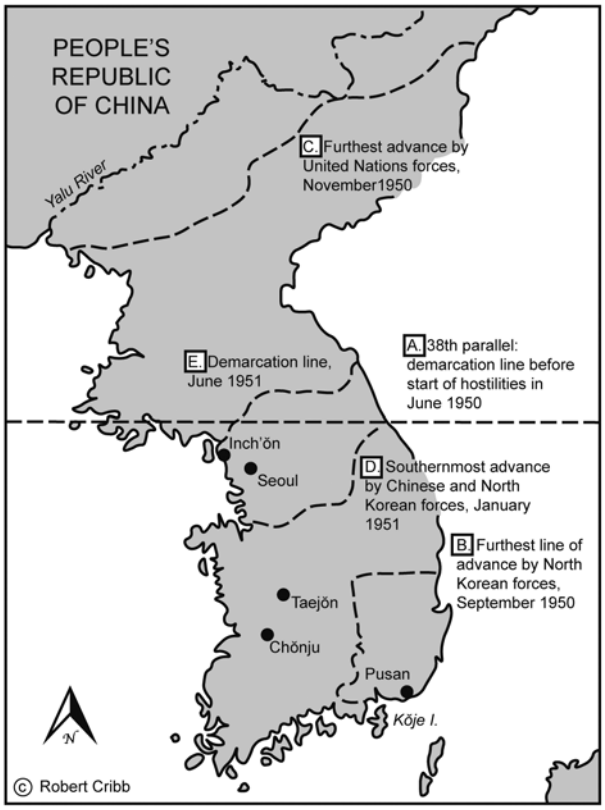
Conflicting visions for Korea's future became further entrenched in 1948 with the founding of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in the north and the Republic of Korea in the south. As the respective leaders of the new republics, Kim Il-sung and Syngman Rhee turned much of their energy towards consolidating their power and reuniting a country that had never before been divided. While Rhee ultimately failed to gain an American commitment to a South Korean-led military action to unify the two Koreas, Kim was able to acquire Joseph Stalin's and Mao Zedong's reluctant support for his invasion of the south.[3]

1 'A Study of the Administration and Security of Oriental Communist Prisoners of War During the Korean Conflict, Vol. I', Box 1660 Reference File, 12, RG 338 Eighth U.S. Army, [U.S.] National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, MD (hereafter NARA).

2 Bruce Cumings, *Origins of the Korean War, Vol. 1* (Seoul: Yuksabipyungsa, 1981), pp. 103–117.

3 Wada Haruki, *The Korean War: an International History* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2013), pp. 58, 60–61.

The NKPA, which included veterans of anti-colonial struggles against the Imperial Japanese Army and volunteers who had backed the Communists against the Kuomintang in China's civil war of 1946–1949, initially met comparatively little resistance from the greener Republic of Korea forces in their push southward. On 27 June 1950, after recognising the need to include South Korea along with Japan in the U.S. containment strategy against Communist expansion, U.S. President Harry S. Truman announced to the United Nations and the world that the United States would intervene in a 'police action' to push North Korean troops back to the 38th parallel. And, with Soviet Union representative Jacob Malik boycotting the Security Council because of the United Nations' refusal to admit China, attending delegates overwhelmingly passed a resolution authorising the United States to lead the sixteen nations that would initially comprise UN forces opposing the North's invasion.[4]


PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA
Yalu River
C. Furthest advance by United Nations forces, November1950
E. Demarcation line, June 1951
A. 38th parallel: demarcation line before start of hostilities in June 1950
Inch'ŏn
Seoul
D. Southernmost advance by Chinese and North Korean forces, January 1951
B. Furthest line of advance by North Korean forces, September 1950
Taejŏn
Chŏnju
Pusan
Kŏje I.
N
© Robert Cribb

MAP 14.1
Korea, 1950–1951

4 Bruce Cumings, *Korea's Place in the Sun: a Modern History* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1997), pp. 265–266.

By 24 July 1950, nearly one month after the start of the conflict, U.S. troops had captured 224 North Korean soldiers. American forces initially detained prisoners in abandoned school buildings, colonial-era prisons, and open spaces near Seoul before transporting them to 'POW Enclosure 1' in the southeastern port city of Pusan.[5] Overwhelmed by the NKPA, American troops and South Korean forces retreated to an area in the southeast corner of the peninsula that included Pusan to defend what was called the 'Pusan Perimeter'.

With General Douglas MacArthur's Inch'ŏn landing on the west coast of the peninsula on 15 September 1950, executed in coordination with General Walton Walker's Eighth U.S. Army in the east, UN troops were able to push North Korean forces back towards the 38th parallel. The American-led counterstrike was a massive pincer attack that crippled the NKPA, severed its supply lines, and led to an increase in the number of North Korean prisoners. Encouraged by the enemy retreat and with Truman's approval, MacArthur launched a 'rollback' strategy to penetrate North Korean territory and gain full control of the Korean peninsula, in a move that exceeded the original UN mandate.[6] By 31 October 1950, UN forces under American leadership had captured 62,040 enemy prisoners, a significantly higher total than the 10,829 POWs recorded on 30 September.[7]

However, unbeknownst to MacArthur, his advance across the 38th parallel also triggered a promise by Mao to repay Kim for his commitment of North Korean troops to his own earlier war against the Kuomintang.[8] On 25 October 1950, the Chinese People's Volunteer Army entered the Korean War and forced the Americans and South Koreans to retreat from their march to the Yalu River, which flows along the northern border of North Korea. Chinese southward advances in November and December prompted UN Headquarters in Tokyo to move its population of healthy male Korean prisoners, as well as male Chinese POWs, to Kŏje Island (Kŏje-do), south of Pusan.[9] The relocation of prisoners under Operation ALBANY sought to protect them from active fighting and to

5 'A Study of the Administration and Security of Oriental Communist Prisoners of War During the Korean Conflict, Vol. I', 12.

6 Steven H. Lee, *The Korean War* (Harlow: Longman, 2001), pp. 48–49.

7 'Recapitulation of Prisoner of War Strength (Compiled from UNC PWIB Records)', File 7, 'Recap of PW Strength 31 July '50–24 Sep '53', Box 1657 Source Papers, 1, RG 338 Eighth U.S. Army, NARA.

8 Wada, *The Korean War*, p. 20.

9 As of 31 December 1950, 615 Chinese People's Volunteer Army POWs had been captured. 'The Handling of Prisoners of War During the Korean War', File 206.02, Box 1650 Final Report, 3–4, RG 338 Eighth U.S. Army, NARA; 'Prisoner of War Facilities, 14 October 1950 G-1 to G-4, G-2', Folder '383.6 (10 July–31 October) Correspondences', Box 729 Security-Classified General Correspondence 1950, RG 338 Eighth U.S. Army, NARA.

alleviate the 'condition of confusion that was dangerous to the security of the United Nations forces' resulting from the thousands of refugees flooding into the area.[10]

Despite efforts to isolate the POWs from civilian populations, South Korean and American interrogators discovered a significant number of Korean civilians among the prisoners.[11] Some of the Korean POWs captured by UN forces were North Korean soldiers, others were North Korean civilians forcibly impressed into the NKPA. UN troops also detained North and South Korean refugees who were simply at the wrong place at the wrong time. For example, a 31 October 1951 report for POW Enclosure 9 noted that prisoners asked to be released 'for reasons that they are non-participants in the present Korean conflict and some of them said that they were refugees who were caught in the field of battle in Korea'.[12] Meanwhile, some South Koreans had volunteered for the NKPA as the North Koreans moved south of the 38th parallel while others had been forcibly conscripted. Among the detained were 700 women.[13]

While secondary studies that focus on the POW issue in the Korean War make passing reference to the existence of Korean female POWs in U.S. custody, very little attention is given to their actual experiences.[14] Even in notable Korean-language studies, the story of female POWs is relegated to a side note.[15] Part of the reason is that the documentary evidence on Korean POW women and the policies associated with their care is scattered.

I argue that the military's fragmented records, in fact, point to the U.S. Army's ambivalence towards its female POWs and its struggle to negotiate between what was traditionally expected of women and their anomalous position as POWs. The codes for the protection of POWs that emerged with the Third Geneva Convention of 1949, which were applicable to the Korean War, acknowledged the growing participation of female combatants by explicitly outlining requirements for the treatment of female POWs. Nevertheless, the U.S Army's reluctance to recognise and treat Korean female prisoners as combatants was not only evident in how it initially detained the women, but also in how it reacted when some female prisoners later engaged in combatant

10 'A Study of the Administration and Security of Oriental Communist Prisoners of War during the Korean Conflict, Vol. I', 12.

11 Ibid.

12 'Command Report, 31 October 1951', File 'PWEN-9', 1, Box 5369 Prisoner of War Enclosure #9, RG 407 Department of Army Command Report, NARA.

13 'Among 700 Female POWs, 450 Wish for Repatriation', *Chosŏn Daily*, p. 1.

14 See, for example, Rosemary Foot, *A Substitute for Victory: the Politics of Peacemaking at the Korean Armistice Talks* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990).

15 See Cho Sŏng-hun, 'Han'guk Chŏnjaengchung UN-k'un P'orojŏngch'aekkwanhan yŏn'gu' (Unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Sŏng-Nam, 1998).

behaviour in the camps. Drawing upon feminist scholarship on women in war and international humanitarian law, I examine U.S. and South Korean archival materials not only to provide a substantive historical account of the experience of Korean female POWs south of the 38th parallel during the Korean War, but also to explore how notions of gender shaped the U.S. Army's handling of the prisoners.

2 Combatants: Expected and Unexpected

The 1949 Third Geneva Convention Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War, to which the U.S. supposedly adhered during the Korean War even though it had not yet been ratified by Congress, refers to POWs in gender-neutral terms: POWs are defined as 'persons' or '[*m*]*embers* of the armed forces of a Party to the conflict' who have been captured and 'who have fallen into the power of the enemy'.[16] However, feminist scholars of international humanitarian law have suggested that codes for the protection of POWs developed over the last four centuries have been based upon historically constructed gendered notions of combatants as protectors (male) and of civilians as the protected (female).[17] By the mid-twentieth century, women were active participants in conventional wars. The 1949 Geneva Convention on POWs accordingly included explicit references to the capture and treatment of female combatants. Article 14 states: 'Prisoners of war are entitled in all circumstances to respect for their persons and their honour. *Women* shall be treated with all the regard due to their sex and shall in all cases benefit by treatment as favourable as that granted to men'.[18] The fact that the code explicitly drew attention to the rights of female soldiers shows that males were considered the standard or accepted gender among combatants.[19] Despite the new reality of female combatants, the U.S. military most certainly anticipated at the outset of the Korean War that combatants would be male.

16 Article 4, A (i), 'Geneva Convention Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War', International Committee of the Red Cross, accessed 6 April 2020, https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/applic/ihl/ihl.nsf/Article.xsp?action=openDocument&documentId=2F681B08868538C2C12563CD0051AA8D. My italics.

17 Helen M. Kinsella, 'Gendering Grotius: Sex and Sex Difference in the Laws of War', *Political Theory*, Vol. 34, No. 2 (April 2006), pp. 161–191.

18 Article 14, 'Geneva Convention Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War', International Committee of the Red Cross, accessed 6 April 2020, https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/applic/ihl/ihl.nsf/Article.xsp?action=openDocument&documentId=F0E25F9F56372523C12563CD0051AB8F. My italics.

19 Kinsella, 'Gendering Grotius', p. 166.

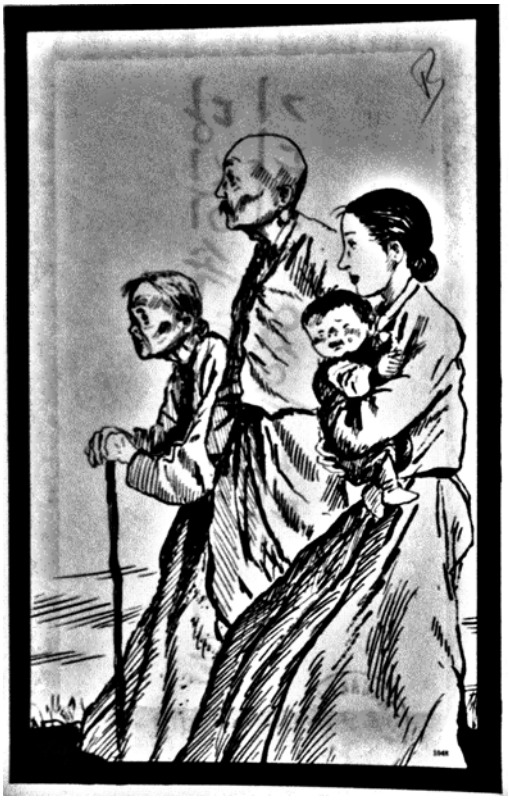


FIGURE 14.1
American propaganda leaflet, aimed at North Korean soldiers.
COURTESY OF THE MACARTHUR ARCHIVES, NORFOLK, VA

Leaflets produced by American psychological warfare units to encourage North Korean soldiers to surrender reflect the assumed male heteronormativity of the combatant population. For example, the following leaflet targeted at the NKPA comprises a portrait of four figures: an elderly woman, an elderly man, and a younger woman holding a baby, looking longingly into the distance. On the other side, the message reads: 'We are waiting for your swift return'.[20]

Here, we can see the kinds of individuals who have come to define the non-combatant: the weak, the aged, children, and women. We can also deduce that the individual for whom they are longing is a virile male. However, American troops reported as early as July 1950 that enemy soldiers were slipping across the frontlines dressed 'as refugees, securing arms and … operating

20 'Longing, Serial 1048', Box 16 Intelligence Psychological Warfare, RG 6 Far East Command 1947–1951, MacArthur Archives, Norfolk, VA (hereafter MacArthur Archives).

against our rear', thus blurring the supposed lines between combatant and noncombatant.[21]

Furthermore, North Korean forces included female soldiers. South Korean National Assembly member Lee Chan Sung, who escaped Seoul after the NKPA overran the capital city, witnessed '[f]emale soldiers with short cropped hair … used in front line' and noted that '50,000 citizens were recruited by [North Korea] in Seoul … [including] a large number of females between the ages of 18 and 38'. He added that 'even women with children were forced to join'.[22] Lee's report that some female prisoners had been 'recruited' while 'even women with children were forced to join' reflects the fact that this civil war drew in all kinds of people.

The fact that U.S. forces confronted a mixed enemy population of northern and southern men, women and children, not necessarily marked as northern or southern, Communist or anti-Communist, or combatant or non-combatant, exacerbated anxieties regarding how to identify the enemy. This is evident in a two-page, fourteen-inch by seventeen-inch poster that accompanied lecture materials on espionage prepared by the American Counter-Intelligence Corps (CIC). On one sheet, four images of different Korean men form four quadrants with the following caption: 'You cannot tell spies by sex, shape, or size'. The second sheet features the same composition, but on the top left is a photograph of an older woman, on the top right is a younger woman, on the bottom left is a young boy, and on the bottom right is an adult male. The caption reads: 'But one caught today will save GI lives!'[23]

Along with the captions, the nondescript figures are meant to place American soldiers on alert to the fact that the enemy could be any Korean. According to the CIC's instructions, the posters 'should be prominently posted in the company area' in order 'to provide a continuing reminder of the problem' of identifying spies. It was necessary to impress upon troops 'that spying in Korea is an actuality, worthy of your constant attention'.[24]

The standard positioning of the figures in the photographs gives the sense that the women and men are interchangeable, regardless of gender and age.

---

21 'Interrogation Report, North Korean Methods of Operation, 23 July 1950', Folder 'Enemy Methods of Opns', Box 51 Intelligence Administration Files: 1950, RG 338 Eighth U.S. Army, NARA.

22 'Special Interrogation, Report No. 0018 Lee Chan Sung and Wife, 9 August 1950', Folder 'G-2 Action File '50', Box 51 Intelligence, RG 338 Eighth U.S. Army, NARA.

23 'Espionage in the Korean War, Prepared by 210th CIC Detachment', in folder 'KLO Special Reports', Box 54 Intelligence Administration Files 1951, RG 338 Eighth U.S. Army, NARA.

24 Ibid., pp. 2, 4.

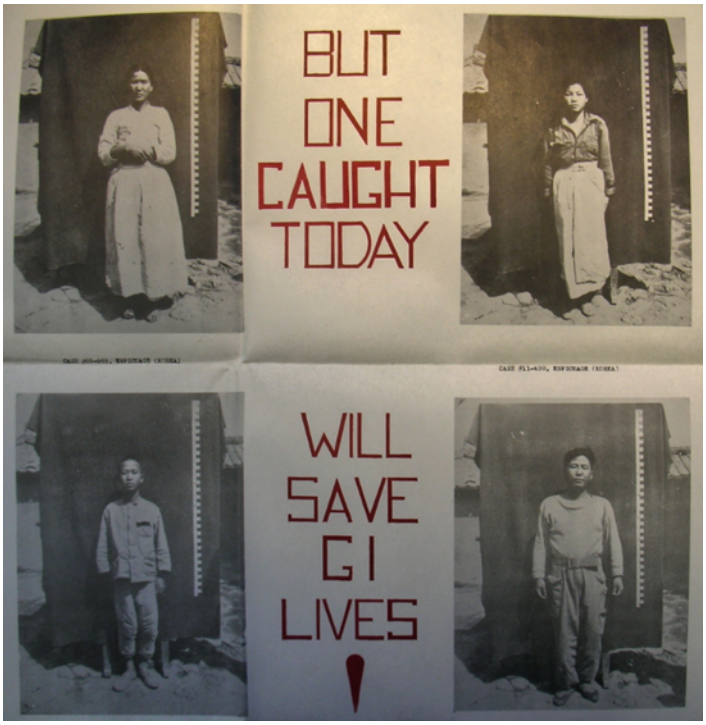


FIGURE 14.2 Poster produced by American intelligence headquarters, aimed at U.S. soldiers.
COURTESY OF THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS ADMINISTRATION, COLLEGE PARK, MD

The CIC insisted that officers inform their troops that: 'Those pictures bring home an important point: these agents look just like any other Korean. They are old and they are young. They are both sexes. They are fat and they are thin. They are farmers, they are merchants. THEY ARE SPIES!'[25] The CIC sought to shed light on the pressing problem of 'espionage by saturation', referring to the ways in which the enemy utilised a large number of diverse individuals as spies for information-gathering purposes.[26] If uncertainty regarding enemy subjects and diversity of suspected spies were the order of the day, it is possible that the presence of women among POWs was not as jarring as one would expect and did not require special attention or record-keeping.

25 Ibid., p. 13.
26 Ibid., p. 6.

3 Captives: Assumed Docility

The UN counterattacks in September 1950 severed North Korean supply lines. The devastation of war further limited the ability of soldiers with the NKPA to procure local sources of food. As a result, North Korean captives came into U.S. custody malnourished, dehydrated and suffering from numerous ailments. Furthermore, due to the rapid influx of large numbers of prisoners, as well as shortages of personnel and materials, U.S. Army logistical units could not build camps fast enough, with the result that conditions worsened for prisoners. Overcrowded detention areas perpetuated unhygienic living conditions, with typhus brought on by rampant lice infestation and an increase in cases of dysentery due to inadequate water supplies. The U.S. Army tried to meet the food demands of tens of thousands of POWs with shipments of Annam rice from Vietnam and with army rations. The change in diet caused further ailments among prisoners unaccustomed to canned meats and vegetables. These early challenges affected the entire POW population, male and female prisoners alike. Eventually, however, as the routine of captivity settled and the U.S. Army provided relatively reliable sources of food and materials, many of the immediate crises dissipated.[27]

Korean female POWs were detained in barracks-style accommodation similar to that of their male counterparts. However, unlike the majority of the healthy male POW population, which was moved to Kŏje Island beginning in January 1951, women remained in Pusan's Camp 1 in Compound 9 along with infirm men. In a July 1951 inspection report of 18,600 POWs remaining on the mainland, the types of compounds were listed as follows: 'Surgical, Orthopedic, Tubercular, Labor, Closed, Transient, Isolation and Detention, and, Women'.[28] The relegation of healthy women to the same compound as hospitalised men highlights the U.S. Army's view that its female POWs were non-threatening and could be detained alongside incapacitated prisoners.

Healthy male POWs were detained under higher security, were much more regimented in their daily activities, and were required to provide manual labour aimed at the overall maintenance of the camps (e.g., camp construction, repairs, waste removal, food preparation). Documents describing work duties for female POWs focus on their roles as nurses and nursing aides. A July 1951

27 Grace Chae, 'Captive Minds: Race, War, and the Education of Korean POWs in U.S. Custody, 1950–1953' (Unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Chicago, 2010), pp. 93–160.

28 'Liaison Inspection Trip, 23 July 1951', Folder 319.1 'Misc Rep Jun 1951 to Dec 1951', Box 1 CIE Section, RG 554 FECOM, NARA.

memorandum for Compound 9 reported that 'Women work in wards but could take some training'.[29] POW Camp Commanding Officer Thomas Herren suggested to the Surgeon General of the Korean Communications Zone for the UN forces, which was responsible for the camps, that Korean female POWs should be further exploited for their labour as nurses and aides in medical compounds: 'Female Prisoners of War will be screened to determine qualifications and to select women who have aptitudes which would indicate that they are capable of absorbing medical training and becoming efficient personnel in the medical installation'.[30] Such was the case for 22-year-old Kim Jŏng-yu, who was captured by the U.S. Army after having been forced to join the NKPA to tend to injured North Korean soldiers as they moved from Taejŏn to Chŏnju. As a graduate of Seoul University's nursing program, Kim was assigned to work as a nurse during her three years in the POW camp.[31]

The extent to which Herren sought more broadly to exploit female labour for nursing reflects gendered notions of appropriate types of work for women in military environments. The U.S. Army's view of women as non-threatening contributors to war paralleled its policy towards the U.S. Women's Army Corps, which limited American servicewomen to nursing and supportive roles and prohibited them from combat duty.[32] The focus on women's labour in a supportive capacity in the nursing field also avoided any recognition that some of these women had been combatants in the NKPA and that they might require a level of detention similar to that of their male counterparts in camps with higher security.

While the American captors' assumption that female prisoners were docile seems to contradict the CIC's insistence that Korean females and males posed an equal threat, the women were regarded more as intelligence threats than as combatants. This was the case for sixteen-year-old North Korean Pak Ok Soon, the young female depicted in the top right quadrant of the poster in *Figure 14.2*. Despite her ties to a band of leftist guerrillas working with the NKPA, the CIC described her as 'cute' and 'a little pert of a thing' who worked with another 'cute' woman to gather information on the UN military situation near Ch'unch'ŏn. The CIC reported that although Pak, who had been captured at the end of May 1951, was at first 'very uncooperative', she confessed to her actions after a few days of 'kind' treatment before being sent south, 'where she will

29 Ibid.

30 'Memorandum from Thomas W. Herren, Commanding to Surgeon KCOMZ, 2 September 1952', Folder: 'Vol. III Ref Files Aug 1952 to Jun 1953', Box 1651 Reference Files, RG 338 Eighth U.S. Army, NARA.

31 'I Was a Korean Female POW', *Chosŏn Daily*, 17 September 1952, p. 2.

32 Bettie J. Morden, *The Women's Army Corps, 1945–1978* (Washington, D.C.: Center of Military History, U.S. Army, 1990), pp. 107–108.

remain until the war is over, no longer a threat to our security'.[33] Such patronising portrayals were absent in descriptions of male captives. In Allied Translator and Interpreter Section reports, male prisoners were evaluated according to their levels of intelligence, education and military training, and also according to whether they were cooperative and in good physical condition.[34] In these records, male captives were evaluated not only for their intelligence value, but also their threat level.

While, officially, female POWs were separated from male POWs in the Pusan camp, U.S. Army records reveal a much more complicated and fluid reality. Korean female POWs often accompanied medical personnel throughout the camp and found various ways to travel between compounds. The porousness of the boundaries resulted in sexual activity between some POW women and POW men, as well as American soldiers. Stanley Weintraub, who served as an administrative officer at Camp 1 in Pusan during the spring of 1952, observed that 'some of the "nurses" seem to have followed an older profession of service to armies', sometimes resulting in pregnancies.[35] He recalls facing the dilemma of how to classify their newborns: 'Are children born to PWs [POWs] also PWs?' He felt this marker would unfairly condemn a child. The only alternative was 'to ignore their existence'.[36] For the U.S. military, women occupied familiar roles as nurses, nurse aides, and sexual partners for its troops. Camp commanders did not regard their female detainees as agents capable of defiance or likely to be a threat and thus the women were permitted to have more freedom in the camps to work alongside their captors in a supportive capacity. The following section will explore what happened when the POW women flouted traditional expectations of service and submission and demonstrated combatant behaviour.

4 Female Combatants: An Aberration of Politics

When the armistice negotiations commenced on 10 July 1951, prisoners recognised the improbability of 'victory' for either side. Monthly POW camp activity reports began to note increasing incidences of violence among prisoners,

33 'Espionage in the Korean War', pp. 11–12.

34 *Nampukhan kwankyesalyochip: Pukhanp'olosimmunpokosŏ* [General Headquarters Far East Command, Military Intelligence Section, General Staff, Allied Translator and Interpreter Section, *Interrogation Reports North Korean Forces*, Vol. 24, September 1950], (Seoul: National Institute of Korean History, 1996). See Report Nos. 1205, 1206 (pp. 50–52).

35 Stanley Weintraub, *The War in the Wards: Korea's Unknown Battle in a Prisoner-of-War Hospital Camp* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1964), p. 50.

36 Ibid., p. 53.

together with challenges to camp commanders. In the women's camp at Pusan, three women were found after having been beaten on 29 September 1951 by other women prisoners in Compound 9.[37] Female prisoners also held demonstrations and protests in the camp, sometimes in coordination with other compounds. For example, on the same day, 'women PW's in Compound #9 started a hunger strike' while 'prisoners in Compound #3 refused their breakfast and lunch after a honcho (leader) had been removed. They resumed eating at supper time'.[38] The hunger strike was an effective tool in the POWs' cache as it made the U.S. Army vulnerable to scrutiny from International Committee of the Red Cross representatives who periodically inspected camps and reported on the treatment of prisoners.

Power struggles within the camps came under greater influence of both anti- and pro-Communist agendas after the United States government announced its proposal for voluntary repatriation of POWs to North Korea at the armistice negotiations on 2 January 1952. For nearly seventeen months, negotiators jousted. Communist representatives rejected the U.S. position as a violation of the 1949 Geneva Convention because repatriation would not be automatic, as POWs would have a choice of whether to be repatriated or not. Apologists argued that the U.S. proposal was consistent with the Convention because it would protect prisoners and their rights as individuals freely to decide their futures. Meanwhile, the U.S. Army initiated a 'screening' program in the camps on 8 April 1952. Under Operation SCATTER, camp commanders separated individuals wishing to return to North Korea (repatriates) from those who would 'forcibly resist' (nonrepatriates) should an armistice occur.[39] Camp commanders began to mobilise healthy repatriate prisoners, including healthy females, into newly designated camps on Kŏje Island.

Many of these repatriate Communist POWs demonstrated against screening procedures to protest the U.S. imposition of 'voluntary repatriation'. Records describing an increasing number of defiant female POW actions during this period stressed the fanatical and hysterical nature of the women's behaviour, in contrast with earlier descriptions of feminine docility. On 28 April 1952, Weintraub witnessed over 600 female repatriate prisoners, 'as uncooperatively as possible, hands jammed into overcoat pockets', board transports for

37 'PWEN #1, Monthly Activity Report, 1 October 1951 to Commanding Officer 60th General Depot', File 'PWEN-1', Box 5369 Army-AG Command Reports, RG 407 55th Quartermaster, NARA.

38 Ibid.

39 'Letter from UNC POW Camp 1 to CG PW Command, 1 July 1953', Folder: 'Volume VI, book 2: Reference Files. Control of Prisoners of War HQ PW Command (Pt 2)', Box 1653 Reference Files, RG 338 Eighth U.S. Army, NARA.

Kŏje Island and begin to 'unleash a parting flurry of rocks, heaving them amid lusty screaming while their long black hair bl[ew] about their faces in gale-driven rain'.[40]

The screening programs continued as the armistice negotiations intensified, leading to some of the worst violence in the camps. Repatriate and nonrepatriate prisoners clashed with one another, as well as with Republic of Korea and American guards. Camp commanders reported numerous incidents of troops firing on prisoners who attacked them with barbed wire flails, crude knives, and spears made from tools used in the vocational training programs for POW reeducation.[41] Things came to a head with the infamous 'Dodd Incident'.

At 3:15 pm on 7 May 1952 on Kŏje Island, Brigadier General Francis T. Dodd, commander of the Kŏje Island prison camps, approached the gates of Compound 76 to address complaints from North Korean prisoners over the screening process and conditions in the camps. The prisoners in the compound seized him. Within the first day of Dodd's three-day detention, prisoners from other compounds, including Pak Soo Pok, Kim Jong Sook, and Kim Jong Ja from the all-female Communist Enclosure 8 in Compound 80, were invited into Compound 76 to negotiate new treatment terms with Dodd, face to face.[42] The next day, UN Headquarters dispatched Brigadier General Charles F. Colson to the prison camps as the new camp commander on Kŏje-do and charged him with securing Dodd's release. Colson signed a written admission that, among other things, UN forces had committed violent acts of bloodshed 'where many PW have been killed and wounded' and pledged that there would be no more 'forcible screening' of prisoners. Dodd was released on 10 May 1952.[43] Colson's concessions were a huge propaganda blow to the prestige of the U.S. Army. Subsequently, both Dodd and Colson were demoted to the rank of colonel, forced into retirement, and publicly criticised for their blunders.

Prior to the Dodd Incident, the U.S. Army had severely restricted press access to the camps.[44] However, no longer able to conceal the chaos, General Mark W. Clark, newly appointed as Commander in Chief of UN Forces, pursued a more direct approach with reporters and provided the press with

40 Weintraub, *War in the Wards*, p. 85.

41 'A Study of the Administration and Security of Oriental Communist Prisoners of War During the Korean Conflict, Vol. I', 13–14.

42 Monica Kim, *The Interrogation Rooms of the Korean War: the Untold History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019), pp. 178, 198.

43 As cited in Foot, *Substitute for Victory*, p. 119.

44 Steven Casey, *Selling the Korean War: Propaganda, Politics, and Public Opinion in the United States, 1950–1953* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 283, 291.

limited access in order to manage reportage on the camps.[45] Although both male and female POWs captured in Compound 76 sought to address real grievances regarding their treatment and forced screenings, the U.S. Army accounts and emerging press reports of 'fanatic' Communists overwhelmingly buried their voices beneath a persistent narrative of Communist schemes to wreak havoc in the camps.

Soon thereafter, Clark announced that he was sending Brigadier General Hayden L. Boatner to the Kŏje camps to reassert American military authority under a new policy of 'uncontested control', which meant uncompromising and unquestionable U.S. control of the POWs.[46] This action marked the beginning of Operation SPREADOUT, in which overpopulated compounds of 5,000 to 8,000 prisoners were to be broken into smaller enclosures of 500 prisoners.[47] On 10 June 1952, a *Life* correspondent reported:

> Boatner sent in two battalions of paratroopers. Attacking behind flame throwers and tear gas, troops cut the wire and outflanked the PW defenses. The prisoners fought back against bayonets and concussion grenades with hand-forged spears and homemade Molotov cocktails.[48]

Thirty prisoners died, twelve at the hands of fellow prisoners for surrendering, and 274 were wounded. Meanwhile, one American soldier was killed and fourteen others were injured.[49]

After the dust had settled in Compound 76, the three women who had participated in negotiations with Dodd were, for the first time, put on public display. In a news release in the English-language Japanese paper *Nippon Times* on 12 June 1952, two photographs were featured along with the following caption:

> RED POW RESISTANCE ON KŎJE ISLAND WAS CRUSHED
>
> Left: Cowed POW's who surrendered to the show of force, pick their way through the dead bodies of their compatriots inside the compound. Right: The three North Korean women who were found in Compound 76.[50]

---

45 Mark W. Clark, *From the Danube to the Yalu* (Blue Ridge Summit: Tab Books, 1988; first publ. 1954), pp. 48–49.

46 'Incoming Message from CINCFE to DEPTAR regarding Van Fleet's Plan for Uncontested Control, Presented by Clark, 17 May 1952', Box 1650 Final Report, RG 338 Eighth U.S. Army, NARA.

47 'Memorandum for Commanding General 2d Log Comd, 22 May 1952', Box 1651 Reference Files, RG 338 Eighth U.S. Army, NARA.

48 'Koje is Blasted, Subdued', *Life*, 23 June 1952, p. 30.

49 'A Doubt About Communism, A Spear Through the Heart', *Life*, 23 June 1952, p. 31.

50 *Nippon Times*, 12 June 1952, p. 2.

FIGURE 14.3 'Red POW Resistance on Kŏje Island was Crushed', *Nippon Times*, 12 June 1952

In the picture on the left, '[c]owed' male prisoners are photographed from afar, arms behind their heads, with dead and injured prisoners on the ground. On the right, Pak Soo Pok, Kim Jong Sook and Kim Jong Ja are featured close-up, in army uniform. While the women's appearance as combatants with short-cropped hair and army uniforms harmonises with one's expectations of what a combatant should look like, it also jolts many people's expectations of what a woman should look like. These women do not look like the docile female POWs Herren suggested should be exploited as nursing aides to support medical staff in the camps. They are combatants.

The apparent incongruity struck South Korean Hahm Jin-ok, who entered the Kŏje camp for POW women in search of refugees from Hungnam, North Korea. She describes holding a prisoner's hands and being struck by the fact that they felt like a man's. She asked the North Korean woman: 'are we not the same race that has the same *T'angun* ancestor [the mythical progenitor of the Korean nation]? And, as we are both women, should we have any reason to hate each other?' She wondered why this female POW had to suffer as a 'slave of Kim Il-sung', never to know happiness as a woman, perhaps as wife or mother, and why these POWs treated each other so brutally in ways that even 'animals' did not.[51] Interestingly, Hahm draws racial, gender, and human connections in an attempt to transcend what she sees as a tragic political divide. Yet, she cannot deny her own politics as she resorts to anti-Communist rhetoric in her view of the prisoner as a 'slave' to the North Korean leader.

This inability to understand how women could behave in such aberrant ways, where combatant behaviour appeared incompatible with the female gender, reflects what Robin Riley found in her study of women in war. She argues that female suicide bombers in the Middle East 'challenge long held gendered beliefs about women's weakness, vulnerability, and need for protection' and 'violate cultural images of women as peaceful mothers, supportive

51 Hahm Jin-ok, *Chŏlmŭmi Onda-myeon Ta-si I Kirŭl* (Taegwangmunsa, 1985), pp. 154, 155.

cheerleaders, or reluctant participants in war'.[52] Weintraub's own description of the departing repatriate women reveals a similar uneasiness: 'These women are a strange crew.... Many are as surly and fanatical as the men, and can be believed when they claim to have borne arms as well as children'.[53] Thus, the notion of women as combatants, as Riley writes, 'enhances the sense of perplexity, fear, and aversion to the perpetrators of the acts [of violence]' as unnatural beings.[54]

Explanations for such incongruous and perplexing behaviour often pointed to the supposedly pathological effects of Communism. The suggestion that Communism was a disease that ate away at independent rationality was a pervasive Western trope that is conspicuous in U.S. Army records regarding detained POWs. Furthermore, the fact that the prisoners were 'Oriental' made them particularly susceptible, according to military intelligence studies, as they were racially and culturally conditioned to submit to authoritarian power.[55] A report on repatriated Korean female prisoners who left the camps on 8 August 1953 recorded that the departing women, 'in the complete control of their leader or "honcho"', fanatically waved flags, sang, and shouted.[56] It was as if the prisoners who sought repatriation could not have done so of their own free will because they were necessarily under the control of others. While many repatriate female POWs might have believed in class struggle and its capacity to create a democratic post-colonial Korean nation, they may also have hoped for repatriation for reasons as varied as wanting to reunite with family, return to their homeland, or avoid persecution by South Koreans who would see them only as enemy sympathisers.[57] Explaining away female POW behaviour as irrational and reflective of Communist domination erases the possibility for Korean female POWs to act on the basis of their own politics and choices, much as Riley argues for female suicide bombers.

The U.S. Army was not alone in its ambivalence towards Korean women as combatants. While U.S. Army officials attempted to depict themselves as representatives of a humane custodial power struggling to manage fanatical

52 Robin Riley, 'War, Women's Bodies, and the Practice of Gender', *Sociology Compass* 2/4 (2008), p. 1203.

53 Weintraub, *War in the Wards*, p. 50.

54 Riley, 'War, Women's Bodies', p. 1203.

55 'The Oriental Communist Prisoner of War', Folder: 'A Study of the Administration and Security of Oriental Communist Prisoners of War During the Korean Conflict, Vol. II', 104–105, Box 1660 Reference File, RG 338 Eighth U.S. Army, NARA.

56 'A Study of the Administration and Security of Oriental Communist Prisoners of War During the Korean Conflict, Vol. I', 58.

57 Lee Hŭng-bok, *PW 98211* (Seoul: Tosŏch'ulp'an-Haengshin, 1995), p. 152.

North Korean POWs who were under the control of Communist leaders, the North Koreans emboldened their own anti-American propaganda by including reports on the allegedly inhumane U.S. treatment of female prisoners. In its report on the 'Atrocities of the American Aggressors Against the Prisoners of War of Korean People's Army', the North Korean government accused the United States of raping, torturing and humiliating female POWs.[58] Some North Korean male prisoners also submitted petitions to their American captors to protest American offences, which allegedly included 'employing gas in the compound where female prisoners of war were interned, and injuring the children located therein'.[59] All rioting prisoners had been exposed to tear gas when tensions mounted during Operation SPREADOUT. The comment that female prisoners had been subjected to the same treatment as males, however, constituted an attempt to exploit their supposed fragility to emphasise the intolerable nature of prisoner treatment and to provide proof of the brutality of American policies according to Communist propaganda. The North Korean leadership's emphasis on the vulnerability of women as combatants demonstrates that discomfort with women in war was not unique to the U.S. Army. Indeed, it perhaps underlined North Korea's own ambivalence about the role of women in revolution: whether they should be equal partners in the workforce or mothers and 'caretakers' of a new nation.[60]

5 Conclusion

Despite growing recognition of the role of women in war by the 1950s, archival documents reveal that the U.S. Army's approach to the detention of Korean female POWs was fraught with ambiguity. Camp commanders wavered between whether to regard Korean female POWs as docile captives or as combatants, resulting in a disordered approach to female POW detention during the Korean War. Although early intelligence accounts identified women acting as spies and combatants, camp commanders regarded POW women in accordance with

58 Choguk T'ongil Minjujuŭi Chosŏn (trans. as Report of the Central Committee of the United Democratic Fatherland Front of Korea on the Atrocities of the American Aggressors against the Prisoners of War of Korean People's Army) (Dept. of Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries: Ministry of Culture and Propaganda, DPRK, 1954), Library of Congress (LC 61037481).

59 'A Study of the Administration and Security of Oriental Communist Prisoners of War During the Korean Conflict, Vol. I', 57.

60 Suzy Kim, *Everyday Life in the North Korean Revolution, 1945–1950* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2013), p. 175.

historically entrenched expectations of women as non-threatening actors suitable for traditional nursing and other supportive roles in the camps. As political tensions over the armistice negotiations fueled violent clashes between repatriate and nonrepatriate POWs and camp guards, camp commanders were forced to adjust their perceptions of female prisoners. Some female POWs were now clearly violent actors. Camp commanders, however, did not reframe their understanding of Korean POW women to encompass an appreciation that their personal and political stakes in the war might have compelled them to participate in prison demonstrations and riots. Rather, they regarded female POWs through the distorted lens of anti-Communist propaganda that insisted they were puppets under despotic control.

Acknowledgments

The Academy of Korean Studies (MEST) (AKS-2010-DZZ-3104) provided support for the completion of this article.

References

Casey, Steven, *Selling the Korean War: Propaganda, Politics, and Public Opinion in the United States, 1950–1953* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

Chae, Grace, 'Captive Minds: Race, War, and the Education of Korean POWs in U.S. Custody, 1950–1953', (Unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Chicago, 2010).

Cho Sŏng-hun, 'Han'guk Chŏnjaengchung UN-k'un P'orojŏngch'aekkwanhan yŏn'gu' (Unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Sŏng-Nam, 1998).

Clark, Mark W., *From the Danube to the Yalu* (Blue Ridge Summit: Tab Books, 1988; first publ. 1954).

Cumings, Bruce, *Korea's Place in the Sun: A Modern History* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1997).

Cumings, Bruce, *Origins of the Korean War, Vol. 1* (Seoul: Yuksabipyungsa, 2002; first publ. 1981).

Foot, Rosemary, *A Substitute for Victory: the Politics of Peacemaking at the Korean Armistice Talks* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990).

Hahm Jin-ok, *Chŏlmŭmi Onda-myeon Ta-si I Kirŭl* (Taegwangmunsa, 1985).

Kim, Monica, *The Interrogation Rooms of the Korean War: the Untold History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019).

Kim, Suzy, *Everyday Life in the North Korean Revolution, 1945–1950* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2013).

Kinsella, Helen M., 'Gendering Grotius: Sex and Sex Difference in the Laws of War', *Political Theory*, Vol. 34, No. 2 (April 2006), pp. 161–191.

Lee Hŭng-bok, *PW 98211* (Seoul: Tosŏch'ulp'an-Haengshin, 1995).

Lee, Steven H. *The Korean War* (Harlow: Longman, 2001).

Morden, Bettie J., *The Women's Army Corps, 1945–1978* (Washington, D.C.: Center of Military History, U.S. Army, 1990).

Riley, Robin, 'War, Women's Bodies, and the Practice of Gender', *Sociology Compass* 2/4 (2008), pp. 1192–1208.

Wada, Haruki, *The Korean War: an International History* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2013).

Weintraub, Stanley, *The War in the Wards: Korea's Unknown Battle in a Prisoner-of-War Hospital Camp* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1964).

CHAPTER 15

Seeking Refuge Amid Suffering in Indonesia's Galang Vietnamese Refugee Camp

Jemma Purdey

Abstract

In 1979, the Indonesian government established a camp for Vietnamese refugees on the island of Galang in the Riau archipelago near Singapore. As Indonesia was not a signatory to the United Nations Refugee Convention, the camp was intended to provide facilities for the processing of refugees for settlement in other countries. The refugees were kept entirely separate from local Indonesian populations. Altogether, at least 122,000 refugees passed through the island. Although the Galang camp was widely praised as comfortable and well-run, the reality was more complex. Visitors and residents reported many cases in which inhabitants were victimised by extortion and violence, including sexual violence, carried out by both Indonesian staff and Vietnamese refugees. The last refugees left the camp in 1996, and the site was turned into a tourist park. Two memorials on site commemorate sexual violence against refugee women; they are the only memorials in Indonesia to explicitly mark cases of violence against women. A memorial celebrating the refugees and Indonesia's hospitality towards them was erected in early 2005 but was removed soon after in response to Vietnamese official objections.

Keywords

Vietnamese refugees – Galang Island – sexual violence – refugee status – dark tourism – memorialisation Indonesia – detention camps

Between 1975 and 1995 around two million people fled Vietnam and Cambodia. The fall of Saigon in 1975 marked the end of the Second Indochina War and the victory of Vietnamese communist forces over their anti-communist antagonists. This event precipitated an exodus of people, primarily from the south of Vietnam, fearing persecution and retribution in the regime's re-education

©

camps (discussed by Nathalie Nguyen in this volume).[1] As time passed, political and economic hardships also led Vietnamese from the north along with Cambodians and Laotians to risk their lives by escaping from the communist regimes. By late 1978, tens of thousands of refugees had boarded small boats, taking perilous journeys across the South China Sea and beyond. Twenty thousand people left Vietnam each month, heading mainly for Malaysia and Thailand. An estimated fifty percent of those who attempted the voyage perished.[2] Those who made landfall or were rescued by passing ships lived as refugees in makeshift camps across Southeast Asia and in Hong Kong.[3] Thousands of them lived on the northernmost islands of Indonesia's Riau province.

A series of meetings of representatives of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) member states, resettlement countries and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) culminated in an agreement in Geneva in June 1979 to facilitate a program of transit and resettlement for the refugees. The Indonesian government was among those countries in the region that agreed to provide 'first asylum' to the refugees and to host a temporary refugee transit camp. The Galang Refugee Transit Camp in Riau Province was established as a part of this regional and international response to the Indochinese refugee crisis.

Indonesia was not then, and is still not, a party to the 1951 United Nations Refugee Convention. It therefore has no domestic mechanism for processing asylum claims and does not offer permanent settlement and integration to asylum seekers. Rather, as Missbach describes it, Indonesia simply 'tolerates' their presence.[4] The agreement reached with the Indonesian government in 1979 stipulated that the Indochinese refugees would stay on Pulau Galang (Galang Island) in Batam Regency in Indonesia's Riau archipelago only for a

1 Ben Kiernan, *Vietnam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), pp. 78–83; Marilyn Blatt Young, *The Vietnam Wars, 1945–1990* (New York: HarperCollins, 1991); Yen Tran, 'The Closing of the Saga of the Vietnamese Asylum Seekers: The Implications on International Refugees and Human Rights Laws', *Houston Journal of International Law*, 17 (1995), p. 465; Nathalie Huynh Chau Nguyen (ed.), *New Perceptions of the Vietnam War: Essays on the War, the South Vietnamese Experience, the Diaspora and the Continuing Impact* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2015).

2 Paul Zach, 'Indonesian Island Chosen for Refugee Processing', *The Washington Post*, 17 May 1979.

3 Bruce Grant, *The Boat People: An Age Investigation* (Ringwood, Vic.: Penguin Books, 1979), p. 149.

4 Antje Missbach, 'Waiting on the Islands of "Stuckedness": Managing Asylum Seekers in Island Detention Camps in Indonesia from the Late 1970s to the Early 2000s', *ASEAS – Austrian Journal of South-East Asian Studies*, 6 no. 2 (2013), p. 284.

'reasonable period' while they were being processed for resettlement in a third country. The UNHCR also agreed to cover all costs, which were predicted at the time to be around US$18 million.[5] It was agreed that Indonesians would administer the camp, while United Nations staff and other foreigners from non-government organisations would be contracted to work as teachers and health professionals.[6]

From 1979 to 1996 the refugee camp on Pulau Galang processed between 122,000 and 145,000 people, most of them Vietnamese refugees who had arrived by boat.[7] With the exception of some 12,000 refugees who arrived on Galang after 1989 and were repatriated to Vietnam after their claims for asylum were rejected, most were settled in a third country.

The Indonesian government describes Galang Island as a 'monument of peace and humanity'[8] and holds it up as an exemplary case of Indonesian humanitarianism and benevolence.[9] Contemporary Indonesian histories position the Galang camp as an example of Indonesia's '*hati emas* (heart of gold)',[10] citing foreign praise for it as the best of all the transit camps in the region at the time. A report in 1990 stated: 'Galang has long been regarded as friendly, open and promising better chances of resettlement in a third country than Thailand and Malaysia's crowded camps.'[11] However, for comparison it should be noted that Indonesia received 122,000 refugees compared with 254,000 in Malaysia, 196,000 in Hong Kong and 160,000 in Thailand.[12]

Following Galang's closure in 1996, Indonesian accounts of its history have in large part been recorded in official histories and memoirs written

5 Antje Missbach, *Troubled Transit: Asylum Seekers Stuck in Indonesia* (Singapore: ISEAS Publishing, 2015), pp. 34–36.

6 See 'Special Galang Issue', *Passage: Journal of Refugee Education* (Washington DC: Refugee Service Center, 1987), https://archive.org/details/ERIC_ED289342. Accessed 13 November 2018.

7 Missbach, *Troubled Transit*, p. 40.

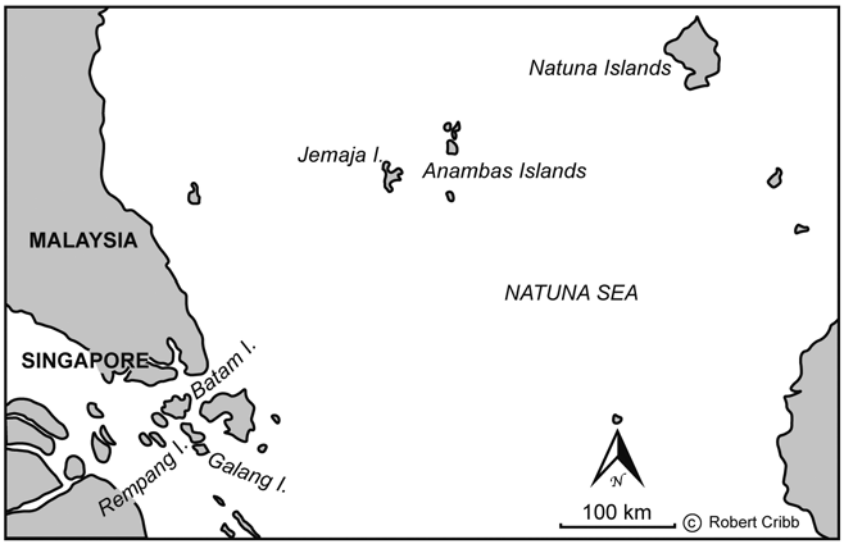
8 Title of a leaflet published by the Indonesian Department of Information (n.d.), reproduced in Isye Ismayawati, *Manusia Perahu* (Jakarta: Kompas Penerbit Buku, 2013), x.

9 Anastasia Wiwik Swastiwi and Asvi Warman Adam (eds), *Pulau Galang, wajah humanisme Indonesia: Penanganan manusia perahu Vietnam, 1978–1996* (Jakarta: Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, Direktorat Jenderal Kebudayaan, Direktorat Sejarah dan Nilai Budaya, 2012).

10 See, for example, 'Menyapa kembali sejarah Pengungsi Vietnam di Indonesia', goodnewsfromindonesia.id, 16 May 2015.

11 Suhaini Azam and Michael Vatikiotis, 'For Those in Peril: Malaysia, Indonesia at Centre of Boat People Row', *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 3 May 1990, p. 9.

12 Bruce Gilley, 'The Final Stretch', *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 18 July 1996, p. 19.



MAP 15.1 Galang Island, Indonesia

by military figures who had a role in the administration of the camp.[13] Aside from the rather hagiographical representations of the camp's administrators, these works provide only sketchy references to the high rates of violence and crime, including sexual assaults, rapes, serious cases of post-traumatic disorder among the asylum seekers, and suicides.[14] Where they are recounted, these incidents are depicted as between refugees, occurring because of measures implemented by the UNHCR or due to the trauma which the refugees had suffered on their journeys to Indonesia.[15]

A more complete examination of the processes and operations of this military-run camp, which was awash with international funding, has not yet been made. Virtually unacknowledged in the Indonesian official literature are abuses of authority by local camp authorities, including corruption, extortion, and physical and sexual violence against women and children, evidence for

13 See M.S. Hasibuan et al., *Prajurit TNI Dalam Tugas Kemanusiaan Galang 96* (Jakarta: Markas Besar Tentara Nasional Indonesia, Pusat Sejarah, 2007).

14 'Pulau Galang dan sejarah kelam manusia perahu Vietnam', okezone.com, 13 May 2016. https://news.okezone.com/read/2016/05/13/18/1387149/pulau-galang-dan-sejarah-kelam-manusia-perahu-vietnam. Accessed 1 September 2018.

15 See Ismayawati, *Manusia Perahu*.

which has been on the public record for decades.[16] When researchers Freeman and Huu visited the camp in 1993, an American social worker in Galang told them, 'There is much sexual abuse in the camp, but because of fear of retribution, people will not speak out'.[17]

For many of those who transited through the camp, Galang indeed provided refuge and the chance to begin a new life in the West, in the United States, Canada, New Zealand, Australia or Europe.[18] For others, however, Galang was a place of great suffering, the causes of which lay both outside and inside the camp itself.

1 Indonesia's Response to the Refugee Problem

Indochinese refugees began arriving on Indonesia's islands bordering the South China Sea in March 1979, directed there by Malaysian authorities who had pushed them back from their territory. The refugees initially set up camps on small islands in the Anambas archipelago, including at Air Raya and Kuku on Jemaja Island, home to approximately 12,000 Indonesians. There the UNHCR, the Red Cross and the Indonesian navy provided them with aid and provisions. By August 1979, 31,491 refugees were registered on the Anambas and nearby Natuna group of islands.[19]

The refugees quickly established themselves into community groups, settled in housing and started businesses. Visitors were impressed by the order, discipline and speed with which they settled alongside the Indonesian residents, establishing 'mini-governments', clinics, churches, schools and pagodas.[20] At

16 Rona M. Fields, 'Life and Death on a Small Island: Vietnamese and Cambodian Refugees in Indonesia', *Migration World Magazine*, 20, no. 5 (November-December 1992). Academic OneFile, http://link.galegroup.com.ezproxy.lib.monash.edu.au/apps/doc/A13858005/AONE?u=monash&sid=AONE&xid=11689d5c. Accessed 29 June 2018.

17 James M. Freeman and Nguyen Dinh Huu, *Voices from the Camps: Vietnamese Children Seeking Asylum* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2003), p. 32.

18 See Anna N. Vu and Vic Satzewich, 'The Vietnamese Refugee Crisis of the 1970s and 1980s: A Retrospective View from NGO Resettlement Workers', *Refuge*, 32, no. 2 (2016), pp. 30–40. https://refuge.journals.yorku.ca/index.php/refuge/article/view/40245. Accessed 1 September 2018.

19 Paul Zach, 'Refugee Relief in Indonesia', *The Washington Post*, 21 August 1979. https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1979/08/21/refugee-relief-in-indonesia-hastened-to-avoid-monsoons/f4ac7133-f5b4-456a-87e6-ddcfc09b5863/?utm_term=.3ea243714444. Accessed 1 December 2018.

20 Ibid.

the same time the Indonesian authorities were eager to find a solution to deal with the growing numbers of refugees on the small islands. As the *Washington Post* reported at the time, the authorities also had concerns about the impact of the refugees on local communities and cultures. An army major was reported as commenting, 'Maybe some people are making money, but these refugees will change our customs.... Better we lose the money and save our customs'. He expressed concern that conflicts could develop between locals and refugees.[21] In mid-1979, with the Geneva Agreement reached and the monsoon approaching, authorities made preparations to shift the refugees to Galang Island.

Galang's size, relative proximity to existing settlements of refugees in the Anambas Islands and to the international port in Singapore, and deep water harbour were important factors in its choice as the processing centre.[22] It was also important that the island was more or less uninhabited – only around 200 people lived there at that time – meaning that contact with the local population could be kept to a minimum.[23] In the final stages before relocation from Anambas and Natuna, refugees were required to wear coloured ribbons identifying the camp each person resided in and keeping them distinct from Indonesians.[24]

Galang had served as a detention camp for Japanese prisoners of war following the end of the Second World War. 59,000 Japanese POWs were detained on Galang and neighbouring Rempang Island, where they were largely left to provide for themselves, clearing the jungle and foraging for food.[25] Over thirty years later the jungle had reclaimed most of the island and no significant structures, barracks or other infrastructure remained from the post-war period. The camp would need to be built from scratch.

Following the meeting of ASEAN foreign ministers, the UNHCR and recipient country representatives in June 1979, President Suharto formalised Indonesia's

21 Paul Zach, 'Refugees Bring Order to Life in Camps', *The Washington Post*, 27 August 1979: https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1979/08/27/refugees-bring-order-to-life-in-camps/5b619221-66e3-45ff-a614-4b6a0d20bbcd/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.ba8e9a92a769. Accessed 1 December 2018.

22 Ismayawati, *Manusia Perahu*, p. 54.

23 Missbach, 'Waiting', pp. 281–306.

24 Zach, 'Refugee Relief'.

25 Stephen Connor, 'Side-stepping Geneva: Japanese Troops under British Control, 1945–7', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 45, no. 2 (2017), pp. 389–405; Richard A. Howard, 'The Role of Botanists during WWII in the Pacific Theatre', in Roy M. MacLeod (ed.), *Science and the Pacific War: Science and Survival in the Pacific, 1939–1945* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 2000), p. 107.

agreement to accommodate the transiting refugees with Presidential Decree No. 38, signed on 11 September 1979. A Management Committee for Vietnamese Refugees (Panitia Pengelolaan Pengungsi Vietnam, P3V) was established under the Ministry of Defence, tasked with coordinating the settlement, administration, processing and security of the refugees in the camp.[26] The Departments of Foreign Affairs and Home Affairs were given coordinating roles related to providing facilities in the camp and negotiating with third countries for onward resettlement, but establishment and administration of the camp were in large part military-led operations. Area Naval Commander, Admiral Kunto Wibisono, was installed as initial head of the local P3V committee, which included army, navy, immigration and police personnel.[27]

The construction and running of refugee camps was a new task for Indonesia, but managing island detention camps was already a preoccupation of the Indonesian military and state elsewhere in the archipelago. At this time plans were underway to close detention camps on Buru Island in the Banda Sea, which had held activists detained for their alleged role in the 1965 coup, as discussed by Ken Setiawan in this volume. Detained on Buru for over a decade without trial, the last of the remaining political prisoners would depart the following year.[28] Further east in recently occupied East Timor, the Portuguese prison island Atauro, off Dili's coast, would soon be reinstated as a detention camp for relatives of resistance fighters, as Hannah Loney shows in this volume.[29]

In the weeks after the Geneva meeting, construction of the camp on Galang proceeded with great haste. When a U.S. government delegation made a one-day visit to the island on 29 August 1979 to inspect progress with the camp's construction, members reported back home:

> certainly camp design and construction plans bear the heavy imprint of the GOI [government of Indonesia] military way of doing things. They

26 Keputusan Presiden No. 38/1979 Koordinasi Penyelesaian Masalah Pengungsi Vietnam di Indonesia (Presidential Decree No. 38 of 1979 Relating to Vietnamese Asylum-Seekers, dated 11 September 1979). https://m.hukumonline.com/pusatdata/detail/lt4fdea8460d9a1/node/lt5118d880a8f5e/keppres-no-38-tahun-1979-koordinasi-penyelesaian-masalah-pengungsi-vietnam-di-indonesia. Accessed 17 April 2020.

27 Ismayawati, *Manusia Perahu*, p. 8.

28 Thomas Fuller, 'Suharto's Gulag / The Buru Island "Humanitarian Project"', *New York Times*, 15 March 2000. https://www.nytimes.com/2000/03/15/news/suhartos-gulag-the-buru-island-humanitarian-project-former-prisoners.html. Accessed 13 November 2018.

29 Also see 'Atauro: Anatomy of a Prison Island', *TAPOL Bulletin* No. 51, May 1982, pp. 1, 3–4.

> acknowledge some … design problems … but argue that the barracks are the best way to get camps built fast and to move refugees from the Anambas before the monsoon season hits. Enormous problems remain in sorting out the results of this crash construction effort; it underscores again the need for the UNHCR to provide guidance on the spot to the GOI.[30]

In the same report it was noted that a member of the delegation, Congressman Joel Pritchard, 'expressed high regard for the competency evidenced by Admiral Wibisono and his plans for Galang but he was puzzled over Wibisono's repeated emphasis on "security", primarily to prevent the Vietnamese refugees from mixing with the local population'.[31]

Despite these early concerns on the part of the U.S. delegation, the efficiency of the Indonesian operation was widely lauded at the time by its international partners including members of the United Nations, the International Red Cross and Médecins Sans Frontières. Head of the UNHCR for the Anambas operation, Terence J. Gavaghan, wrote to Admiral Wibisono in November 1979, 'I can honestly say that in all my years of service with the United Nations in various capacities, since 1962, I have never enjoyed both officially and personally, a relationship of such sustained and sympathetic cooperation with the responsible government authority.'[32] This level of goodwill between Indonesia and its international partners, both government and non-government, continued for the next decades, despite concerns later raised by staff of some of these agencies and nations about the running of the camp.

2 Camp Galang

The Galang Vietnamese Refugee Camp was originally built to hold 6000 refugees. As the exodus from Indochina continued through the early 1980s, this number was soon surpassed. Almost half of the refugees were children under the age of seventeen years. Those who managed to arrive brought harrowing stories of starvation, death and violence on the high seas.[33] From 1980 to 1986,

30 Cable, US Embassy, 'Codel Pritchard visit to refugee camps in Indonesia', 4 September 1979. https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/1979JAKART13983_e.html. Accessed 13 November 2018.

31 Ibid. Minor typographical errors in the original cable have been corrected.

32 Cited in Ismayawati, *Manusia Perahu*, p. 213.

33 Grant, *The Boat People*, p. 54.

the number of boat people resettled annually to the receiving countries (USA, Canada, Australia and some European countries) exceeded the number of new arrivals to the island. However, as the number of arrivals continued to grow into the late 1980s, this balance shifted with receiving countries showing signs of what some described as 'compassion fatigue'. In 1987–1988, as receiving and host countries met for talks to look for ways to stem the flow from Indochina to the camps, the number of arrivals into transit camps in the region almost doubled, rising from 32,994 in 1987 to 62,348 in 1988.[34] As Casella notes, the 'resettlement quotas … did not follow suit'.[35]

This moment was a watershed for what had been until then an 'open' process of resettlement with refugees moving more or less smoothly from transit camp to resettlement in a third country. In response to the escalation of the regional humanitarian crisis, the UNHCR and receiving countries party to the original 1979 agreement drafted a new plan. The Comprehensive Plan of Action for Indochinese Refugees took effect in June 1989, marking the end of automatic recognition of all arrivals as refugees. Instead Vietnamese arriving in Indonesia after 17 March 1989 would be classified provisionally as asylum seekers. Their claim to refugee status on the basis of a well-founded fear of persecution would then be determined individually.[36] As this date approached, the flow of refugees into Galang and other camps became a flood.

As Malaysia struggled to accommodate the growing numbers seeking asylum in their transit camps, authorities engaged in further 'push-backs', refusing to allow boats to disembark there, thus forcing many to continue on to Indonesia. From May 1989–March 1990, Malaysia accelerated its push-backs, forcing boats to continue on to Galang. Refugee advocates claimed 5600 people had been pushed back from Malaysia in this period, resulting in an unknown number of deaths by drowning and increasing the pressure on the camp at Galang.[37] Between June 1989 (when the Comprehensive Plan of Action was introduced) and September 1993, the island housed more than 18,000 refugees in multiple

34 Sindhunata Hargyono, 'Ugly Sanctuary', *Inside Indonesia*, no. 124 (April-June 2016). https://www.insideindonesia.org/ugly-sanctuary. Accessed 14 November 2018.

35 Alexander Casella, 'Managing the "Boat People" Crisis: The Comprehensive Plan of Action for Indochinese Refugees', Policy Paper, New York: International Peace Institute, October 2016, p. 3. https://www.ipinst.org/2016/10/managing-boat-people-indochinese-refugees. Accessed 29 November 2018.

36 Ibid., p. 4.

37 See Azam and Vatikiotis, 'For Those in Peril', p. 8.

camps.[38] Witnesses testify that the atmosphere and sense of security in the camps began to change significantly from this time onwards.[39]

In the early 1990s, visitors to Galang, Freeman and Huu, who had recently visited camps in Hong Kong and the Philippines, recounted that whilst their first impressions were good, it soon became clear that all was not well for residents of Galang.

> At first glance, Galang, where I met the girl who later committed suicide, did not have a prison appearance. This luxuriant island … had ample space for people to walk around. But the temporary wooden dwellings swaying in the wind were constant reminders of the impermanence of the camp. Another older detainee whispered to us, 'Don't be fooled by appearances. This camp is a lot worse than it looks'.[40]

Official Indonesian accounts describe the infrastructure in the camps, including electricity and clean water, as exemplary,[41] whilst others note they were basic but adequate. As the number of arrivals rose, conditions deteriorated. As one former resident, Hong Anh Nguyen, later recalled, 'We had many problems over there because when you live in a camp with about 15,000 people, so many problems. You had not very good facilities, especially the toilet, it was terrible'.[42]

In accordance with the Comprehensive Plan of Action agreement, initial screening of refugees was conducted by members of the Management Committee for Refugees (P3V), who would decide whether or not to recommend their cases for approval by the United Nations staff. As described by various observers and critics of this process, there were vast inadequacies in the system, including lack of training of interviewers, language barriers and the absence of uniform standards and quality control.[43] The impact on the refugees of the growing uncertainty

38 Missbach, *Troubled Transit*, p. 39; Fields, 'Life and Death on a Small Island'; Poya Hobamatan, *Ketika Aku Seorang Asing Kamu Memberi Aku Tumpangan* (Pangkalpinang, Bangka: Merekonstruksi Mozaik Kemanusiaan yang Tercecer, 2001), p. 59.

39 Hobamatan, *Ketika Aku Seorang Asing*, pp. 70–71.

40 Freeman and Huu, *Voices from the Camps*, p. 32.

41 Ismayawati, *Manusia Perahu*, pp. 20–25.

42 Stephen Fitzpatrick, 'Galang's Refugee Hell', *The Australian*, 5 November 2009, https://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/inquirer/galangs-refugee-hell/news-story/31c02109bf54e9da31412a1afd5931b2. Accessed 13 November 2018.

43 Arthur C. Helton, Witness Testimony, United States House of Representatives, 'Comprehensive Plan of Action for Indochinese Asylum Seekers, Hearing before the Sub-committee of International Operations and Human Rights, of the Committee on International Relations', 27 July 1995, pp. 3–5. https://chrissmith.house.gov/uploaded

was significant. A report from the camp command in the early 1990s cited by psychologist Rona Fields noted: 'there is more trouble in the Camp; high blood pressure, sudden heart attacks, mental disorders, crisis in spirit, loss of faith, loss of human dignity and family problems'.[44]

Crucially, the opportunities for systemic extortion and corruption in the form of payments and favours to the local staff, which appear to have been present since the camp opened, grew in proportion to the number of arrivals and their increasing desperation to be resettled, especially after the implementation of the Comprehensive Plan of Action. Gaylord Barr, an American teacher trainer in the camp from 1980 to 1982, was also a keen amateur photographer who compiled a vast archive of images documenting the camp, which he later made available in an online archive. In the caption under one of these hundreds of images, of bags piled high in the harbour, Barr noted, 'When people first arrived on Galang, the Indonesian military would search bags and take any gold, jewelry, electronics … whatever they wanted. Even the Camp Commander's wife would be there for her share'.[45]

FIGURE 15.1 The baggage of arriving refugees was searched by Indonesian military authorities (Gaylord Barr 1981) http://galangcamp.blogspot.com/2011/ accessed 13 November 2018, reproduced by permission.

files/1995.07.27_comprehensive_plan_of_action_for_indochinese_asylum_seekers.pdf. Accessed 13 November 2018.

44 Fields, 'Life and Death on a Small island', p. 16.

45 Gaylord Barr, 'Pictures of Galang Camp (Set 7)', http://galangcamp.blogspot.com/2011/. Accessed 13 November 2018.

Freeman and Huu tell of their direct involvement with such corruption during their short visit to Galang:

> Ten minutes after we arrived in Indonesia, a man offered, for a fee, to buy the release of any asylum seeker in the Galang Camp. We could not tell if this was a scam to defraud us, or a genuine offer. However, in Galang, we gave $1,000 directly to an asylum seeker. His brother in the United States had sent him the money through us. A few months later, we ran into this asylum seeker at a Vietnamese New Year (Tet) festival in San Jose, California.[46]

Australian lawyer and UN staffer Simon Jeans worked on Galang in 1992, assisting the screening process. In his 1995 testimony to a United States government investigation into the Comprehensive Plan of Action, he recounted that extortion was rampant. For those running the camp, he said, 'Galang was a money making venture', adding, 'The line of Indonesia that it was a humanitarian gesture offering Vietnamese asylum is a complete load of rubbish. They obtained money from asylum seekers at every available opportunity'.[47] Buddhist monk, Thich Phouc Sung, who lived in Galang from 1990 to 1994, described a sophisticated extortion racket that went beyond money and goods: 'Everybody in the camp was aware of the corruption practices, such as monetary and sexual extortion from the camp dwellers'.[48]

Carruthers and Huynh-Beattie present accounts from former residents of the camp, including a woman known as 'Hien'. They describe her experience in Galang as more hellish than anything she had experienced in Vietnam or even on the boat journey itself. While Hien lived at Galang, she was raped and tortured by the guards. In 2005, when she returned to the camp as a visitor, those same men apologised for their mistreatment of her and others.[49]

Other sources, including memoirs of former camp residents and accounts by United Nations staffers and their reports dating back to the years the camp was still in operation, also tell an unsettling story of intimidation and abuse of women and men in the camp by the camp authorities. This abuse and

---

46 For examples of 'buying' freedom, see Freeman and Huu, *Voices from the Camps*, p. 98.

47 Simon Jeans, Witness Testimony, U.S. House of Representatives, 'Comprehensive Plan'.

48 The Venerable Thich Phouc Sung, Buddhist monk, Witness Testimony, U.S. House of Representatives, 'Comprehensive Plan', pp. 33–34.

49 Ashley Carruthers and Boi Tran Beattie-Huynh, 'Dark Tourism, Diasporic Memory and Disappeared History: The Contested Meaning of the Former Indochinese Refugee Camp at Pulau Galang,' in Yuk Wah Chan (ed.), *The Chinese/Vietnamese Diaspora: Revisiting the Boat People* (New York: Routledge, 2011), p. 157.

extortion, which appears to have been widely known by the UNHCR staffers, journalists who covered the camp and Indonesian authorities, intensified in the years after the Comprehensive Plan of Action commenced in 1989, when the refugees became more and more desperate as their chances of repatriation to a third country grew slimmer.[50]

Journalist John McBeth described the camp in 1994 as in 'a state of anarchy'.[51] The refugees despaired when they realised that they were increasingly unlikely to be approved for resettlement. As in camps in Thailand, Malaysia and Hong Kong, this period was marked by both group and individual protest, hunger strikes and demonstrations, which could turn violent and were often met with an equally brutal response from camp officials.[52] Fields' witness account of the impact of this environment, especially on children and young adult refugees, is chilling. 'On Galang, teenagers and young adults in despair have killed themselves and others have disappeared into the jungle that covers three quarters of the island. One mother of five, believing that her children would have a better chance of resettlement if they were orphans, set herself on fire'.[53]

In July 1994, some months after screening was closed, 200 of the 8000 remaining residents virtually took over the island in protest, resulting in a stand-off with the Indonesian authorities.[54] In response, the army doubled its numbers in the camp and all international aid was withdrawn amid safety concerns for staff.

3 Closing Galang

As a consequence of the protests and associated delays in repatriating the last of the refugees, closing the camp at Galang took far longer than the Indonesian authorities hoped for. Vietnam would not accept refugees who were forcibly repatriated, and so the Indonesians were left with no alternative to 'gradual persuasion' to induce the remaining camp residents to return.[55] In the seventeen years the camp had been in place, the strategic and economic environment of the Riau archipelago had shifted significantly. In 1971, the Indonesian

50 Fields, 'Life and Death on a Small Island', p. 16.
51 John McBeth, 'Long Goodbye: Vietnamese Asylum Seekers Revolt on Island Camp', *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 14 July 1994, p. 16.
52 Hargyono, 'Ugly Sanctuary'; Hobamatan, *Ketika Aku Seorang Asing*, p. 70.
53 Fields, 'Life and Death on a Small Island'.
54 McBeth, 'Long Goodbye', p. 16.
55 Ibid.

government had created the Batam Industrial Development Authority[56] under Ibnu Sutowo, head of the state oil company, Pertamina. In 1978, with the intention of developing the islands as an industrial and communications hub, the Minister for Technology, B.J. Habibie, commenced talks with Singapore about creating a Free Trade Zone for these islands. In 1989, an agreement between the two governments created a so-called 'bonded zone' in Batam and neighbouring islands, which enjoyed tax and duties exemptions. By 1992, Galang and Rempang Islands were also included in this zone.[57] The transit camp's 'pending' closure in the early 1990s coincided with a series of large development projects in the region, one of which was a major infrastructure project to build a series of six bridges connecting a chain of small islands, including Galang, to Batam Island. This project, known as Barelang Bridge, was completed in the late 1990s. A 1993 *Far Eastern Economic Review* report on the planning for the bridges noted that the project added 'fresh urgency' to the plan for closing and emptying the camp at Galang. The senior civil engineer on the project reportedly declared, 'We need the island.... Development has to progress'.[58]

In September 1996, the camp was finally closed and all remaining Vietnamese were repatriated. Authority over the island was handed to the Batam Industrial Development Authority. The former camp, however, was not erased by the new development. Instead, an 'Ex Vietnamese Refugee Camp' park was opened to tourists and locals for recreation, and some initial investment was made to provide amenities for the visitors. Worship was permitted at the former camp's churches and temples.[59] Further development, however, was frustrated by the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis, when anticipated funds for investment and development of Riau islands largely dried up.[60]

In the early 2000s the head of the Batam Industrial Development Authority heralded the former camp's potential as a 'tourism site and humanitarian

56 The Batam Industrial Development Authority has been known over time by several names, including Otorita Batam and Padan Pengusaha Batam.

57 Mulya Amri, 'A Periphery Serving Three Cores: Balancing Local, National and Cross-border Interests in the Riau Islands', in Francis E. Hutchinson and Terence Chong (eds), *The SIJORI Cross-border Region: Transnational Politics, Economics, and Culture* (Singapore: ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute, 2016), pp. 162–163.

58 Margot Cohen, 'Home from the Sea', *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 19 August. 1993, p. 15. See also A. Junaidi, 'Galang Island's Poignant Past Open to Visitors', *Jakarta Post*, 17 January 2000.

59 Junaidi, 'Galang Island's Poignant Past'.

60 Amri, 'A Periphery Serving Three Cores'.

monument'.[61] At this time some investment was made to 'museumise' the park by adding information boards, signposts and a walking path. A museum of exhibits was established in the camp's community hall and in 2003/4, management created the 'Boat People Plaza', bringing two refurbished refugee boats into the park 'to help tourists imagine the boat peoples' distressing journeys across the South China Sea'.[62]

4 Galang the Tourist Park

Today the camp performs various roles – as tourist site for foreigners, as a park for the local community, as a place of pilgrimage for former refugees and as a site for contested histories of this Vietnamese past. Somewhat incongruously and chillingly, alongside the promotion of Indonesian benevolence and 'goodheartedness', the suffering of camp residents is very much 'on show'. Tourists are directed to particular sites for what might be termed 'dark tourism'. Experiences of tragedy have become central to building a new narrative for the camp around ghost stories or '*kisah mistis*'.[63]

By 2017, the information boards next to the statues and in the cemetery containing the remains of the hundreds of refugees who died in the camps over the years were faded and damaged. There was little sign that these sites, apart from the museum displays, were being maintained. The text on the information boards was in Indonesian only. Aside from the museum, the only original buildings remaining are places of worship, the upkeep for which is paid for by donations received from former camp residents. Visitors to the camp appear to be mostly domestic tourists and former camp residents who make the short daytrip from Singapore. In October 2018 the Indonesia Tourism website stated that visitor numbers to Galang were around 1200 per month,[64] meaning about forty visitors per day. A former camp resident, Van N, who visited the camp in October 2015, left a review on Trip Advisor. Its title was 'may not mean anything to the random tourist'. He remarked:

61 Ismeth Abdullah, 'Sambutan Ketua Otorita Batam', in Hobamatan, *Ketika Aku Seorang Asing*, xi.

62 Quan Tue Tran, 'Remembering the Boat People Exodus: A Tale of Two Memorials', *Journal of Vietnamese Studies*, 7, no. 3 (2012), pp. 80–121.

63 'Kisah Misteri', a television series prepared for the privately-owned television station RCTI in 2018, features several episodes referencing Galang. See, for instance, 'Inilah Kejadian Dini Dihantui Galang', [20 Juni 2018], https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ali_FZdMZHg. Accessed 13 April 2019.

64 'Galang Island', http://www.indonesia-tourism.com/riau-archipelago/galang_island.html. Accessed 13 November 2018.

FIGURE 15.2 Boat People Plaza, Galang island Photographer: J. Purdey 2017

> 'the only reason i visited was bc i was a resident of this camp back when it was first built. galang 1, as it was called, doesn't exist anymore. this attraction only has remnants of galang 2 and 3. i only know that bc i bumped into an indonesian security guard there who grew up at the camp and spoke fluent vietnamese. otherwise, the camp is not well curated. most things are not explained. if they are, it's mostly in indonesian, with no english translation. i'm not sure how a random, non-indonesian tourist can understand and appreciate the history of this place.... nevertheless, it was an important visit to me. and a bit of an adventure as we trekked from singapore for the day![65]

Indications are that the majority of visitors to Galang are locals who bring their families for picnics on Sundays. The lack of English or Vietnamese language

65 Van N, *Tripadvisor*, 15 October 2015 (phrasing in original), https://www.tripadvisor.com.au/ShowUserReviews-g3359611-d3253490-r318453775-Galang_Vietnamese_Refugee_CampGalang_Riau_Archipelago_Riau_Islands_Province.html#.

FIGURE 15.3
The noticeboards have not been maintained. Ngha Trang cemetery, Galang island.
PHOTOGRAPHER: J. PURDEY 2017

information at most sites implies the authorities have their eye on a domestic tourist market, not a foreign one.

5 Two Memorials

In 2016, twenty years after the last asylum seekers had left the camp, the authorities invited journalists to tour Galang, now a tourist and recreational park, guided by a man known as Sumardi who was presumably the park manager. It is not known how extensively the journalists toured the park, but it is clear that they were interested in two sites of commemoration in particular. Both sites are on the list of places to visit inside the camp and local tour guides regularly include them in their itinerary.

The first monument sits facing the paved roadway that runs through the park. It is surrounded by well-maintained gardens and is set within an amphitheatre-type area. Created in 1985, the Humanity Statue features a sculpture of a woman by camp resident and refugee, Nguyen Van Tuyen. The monument's plinth tells us it was erected 'in commemoration of UN [United Nations] Day, 1st January 1985' and gives it the name 'Tính Nhân Loại' ('Humanity'). Behind the statue is an information board in Indonesian, added when the site was refurbished in the early 2000s. The information board contains a faded image of a funeral scene and some text.

FIGURE 15.4 Humanity Statue, Galang island
PHOTOGRAPHER: J PURDEY 2017

The language itself is simple, straightforward and descriptive. To paraphrase, it explains that the statue was made by refugees out of sympathy for the plight of a Vietnamese woman who took her own life; 'The woman, whose name was Tinh Nhan, was raped by another refugee at the location where this statue now stands'. It goes on to say that she hanged herself from a tree not far from this site. The final paragraph adds that the number of cases of suicide such as this in the camp was high due to residents experiencing depression or in response to the rejection of their claims by the UNHCR, and their pending repatriation to Vietnam. There are no dates to record Tinh Nhan's death or any other detail. It is possible that the name 'Tinh Nhan', which means 'sweetheart' or 'mistress', is a misunderstanding of a name inscribed on the plinth.

Sumardi's account to the journalists about the origins of the statue was slightly different. In his version Tinh Nhan was raped by seven male refugees before taking her own life out of a sense of shame.[66] He went on to describe how '*hal-hal mistis*' or 'mysterious things' took place at this particular site and

66 'Laporan Khusus', *Batamnews.co.id*, 31 March 2016, 8 May 2016.

FIGURE 15.5
Bodhi Tree, Galang Island
PHOTOGRAPHER: J PURDEY 2017

elsewhere in the camp. 'A visitor suddenly fell ill after taking a selfie at the humanitarian monument', he told them.[67]

The second site is an arrangement of three small shrines at a quiet site by a creek under a large Bodhi tree. Called the Three Ladies Shrine (Miếu Ba Cô) or simply Bodhi Tree, the site commemorates two sisters and another woman who are said to have committed suicide nearby after they, too, were raped. It is a peaceful, evocative and spiritual site. Unlike at the Humanity Statue, there is no further information available at the site, save what visitors are told by the tour guide or can find for themselves online. Since the camp was closed the shrines have been painted and maintained by former camp residents.

In their study of Galang, Carruthers and Beattie-Huynh have pointed to it as an example of 'dark tourism' or, at least, of the park management attempting to generate such visitor interest. Sumardi's style of storytelling and the journalists' subsequent reports about their visits highlight and sensationalise grisly anecdotes of rape, suicides and hauntings.[68] News reports and blog stories about Galang published in the past decade have emphasised the haunted nature of

67 'Hantu-hantu di kampong bekas manusia Perahu Vietnam', *Liputan6.com*, 26 March 2016, https://www.liputan6.com/regional/read/2469655/hantu-hantu-di-kampung-bekas-manusia-perahu-vietnam.

68 Carruthers and Beattie-Huynh, 'Dark Tourism', p. 154.

the place, linking it with travel opportunities that readers can experience for themselves.[69]

This narrative of tragedy and ghosts, however, sits somewhat uncomfortably alongside the dominant narrative of Galang as an example of Indonesia's humanitarianism and good international citizenship. The two narratives are kept separate by the distinctive point, made in all the various retellings of Tinh Nhan's horrific fate and those of the Bodhi Tree women and others who suffered at Galang, that those responsible for the violence leading to the suicides were not Indonesians, but rather fellow Vietnamese, and ultimately also the UNHCR, upon whose decisions their futures depended.

The Humanity Statue and the Bodhi Tree shrines were both erected while the camp was still operational. They have since been added to and maintained in various ways. As sites of commemoration, these were and still are essentially Vietnamese memorials. However, in Indonesia these monuments are singular examples of commemoration of this type of suffering. There is no comparable monument in Indonesia to cases of violence against Indonesian women.

For those few who visit, Galang's memorials to victims of violence are a reminder that a camp established for supposedly benevolent purposes as a place of refuge also became a place of suffering. In Galang's post-camp life as a site of pilgrimage for former refugees and tourists, the narratives of refuge and humanitarianism on the one hand jar with those of suffering and tragedy on the other.

6 Hantu-hantu Galang/ Galang's Ghosts

In March 2005, representatives of the overseas Vietnamese communities erected a memorial on Galang, to coincide with a visit by a group of 150 former residents.[70] On Galang the group applied for and received appropriate permissions for a memorial which commemorated 'hundreds of thousands of Vietnamese refugees on their way to freedom (1975–1996)' and thanked Indonesia for its generosity. The memorial was located in the Boat People Plaza adjacent to the camp museum. However, diplomatic protest from the Vietnamese government was swift and effective. The Vietnamese government pressured Indonesia to remove the memorial on the grounds that it 'denigrated

69 '7 Pulau Paling Berhantu, Berani Uji Nyali ke Sini?', *Liputan 6*, 29 April 2016. https://www.liputan6.com/citizen6/read/2495836/7-pulau-paling-berhantu-berani-uji-nyali-ke-sini. Accessed 13 November 2018.

70 Fadli, 'Former Vietnamese Refugees Hold Reunion', *Jakarta Post*, 16 March 2005.

the dignity of Vietnam' and undermined the spirit of goodwill within ASEAN, which Vietnam had joined in 1995.[71] The memorial on Galang was removed by the camp authorities just a few months later.[72]

Quan Tue Tran suggests that permission to erect the monument on Galang had been granted with the intention of showing 'that Indonesia is a tolerant nation that respects human rights'. He suggests that this display was intended to 'mitigate the gravity of their own past human rights violations'.[73] Though there is no direct evidence to support this claim, Galang did serve to enhance Indonesia's reputation as a good international citizen in its relations with the United States, other regional states and the United Nations. Within Indonesia today, Galang continues to provide a single narrative of good heartedness and international citizenship, which fails to account for or seek to interrogate the role of the state in the darker aspects of that history.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, in early March 2020 the Indonesian government enacted an emergency plan to build a hospital on Galang Island to treat patients. The Indonesian Military Regional Defence Joint Command led the construction and the 460-bed COVID-19 Specialist Hospital was completed in four weeks, with the hospital officially opened on 7 April. It was staffed by medical personnel from the Indonesian Military (TNI), the National Police and the Riau Islands provincial administration and volunteers. The government reported that the hospital would prioritise returning migrant workers. As of 5 March 2022 the hospital had admitted 20,312 patients. The park was closed to tourists and locals.[74]

References

Abdullah, Ismeth, 'Sambutan Ketua Otorita Batam', in Poya Hobamatan, *Ketika Aku Seorang Asing Kamu Memberi Aku Tumpangan* (Pangkalpinang, Bangka: Merekonstruksi Mozaik Kemanusiaan yang Tercecer, 2001).

Amri, Mulya, 'A Periphery Serving Three Cores: Balancing Local, National and Cross-border Interests in the Riau Islands', in Francis E. Hutchinson & Terence Chong

71 Quan Tue Tran, 'Remembering the Boat People Exodus'.

72 Fadli, 'Vietnam Boat People's Plaque Torn Down,' *Jakarta Post*, 20 June 2005.

73 Quan, 'Remembering the Boat People Exodus', p. 95. See also Hargyono, 'Ugly Sanctuary'.

74 Fadli, 'Galang COVID-19 Hospital Ready to Admit TKI, Ease Burden on Regional Hospitals', *Jakarta Post*, 8 April 2020, https://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2020/04/08/galang-covid-19-hospital-ready-to-admit-tki-ease-burden-on-regional-hospitals.html; Lavina, 'Pasien COVID-19 di Wisma Atlet Bertambah 59 Orang dalam Sehari', katadata.co.id, 6 March 2022, https://katadata.co.id/lavinda/berita/6223b814c8670/pasien-covid-19-di-wisma-atlet-bertambah-59-orang-dalam-sehari.

(eds), *The SIJORI Cross-border Region: Transnational Politics, Economics, and Culture* (Singapore: ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute, 2016), pp. 154–180.

Azam, Suhaini and Michael Vatikiotis, 'For Those in Peril: Malaysia, Indonesia at Centre of Boat People Row', *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 3 May 1990, pp. 8–9.

Barr, Gaylord, 'Pictures of Galang Camp (Set 7)', http://galangcamp.blogspot.com/2011/.

Carruthers, Ashley and Boi Tran Beattie-Huynh, 'Dark Tourism, Diasporic Memory and Disappeared History: The Contested Meaning of the Former Indochinese Refugee Camp at Pulau Galang,' in Yuk Wah Chan (ed.), *The Chinese/Vietnamese Diaspora: Revisiting the Boat People* (New York: Routledge, 2011), pp. 147–160.

Casella, Alexander, 'Managing the "Boat People" Crisis: The Comprehensive Plan of Action for Indochinese Refugees', Policy Paper, New York: International Peace Ins titute, October 2016, https://www.ipinst.org/2016/10/managing-boat-people-indochinese-refugees.

Cohen, Margot. 'Home from the Sea', *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 19 August 1993, p. 15.

Connor, Stephen, 'Side-stepping Geneva: Japanese Troops under British Control, 1945–7', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 45, no. 2, pp. 389–405.

Fadli, 'Former Vietnamese Refugees Hold Reunion', *Jakarta Post*, 16 March 2005.

Fadli 'Galang COVID-19 Hospital Ready to Admit TKI, Ease Burden on Regional Hospitals', *Jakarta Post*, 8 April 2020.

Fadli, 'Vietnam Boat People's Plaque Torn Down', *Jakarta Post*, 20 June 2005.

Fields, Rona M., 'Life and Death on a Small Island: Vietnamese and Cambodian Refugees in Indonesia', *Migration World Magazine*, 20, no. 5, (November-December 1992). Academic OneFile, http://link.galegroup.com.ezproxy.lib.monash.edu.au/apps/doc/A13858005/AONE?u=monash&sid=AONE&xid=11689d5c.

Fitzpatrick, Stephen, 'Galang's Refugee Hell', *The Australian,* 5 November 2009, https://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/inquirer/galangs-refugee-hell/news-story/31c021 09bf54e9da31412a1afd5931b2.

Freeman, James M. and Dinh Huu Nguyen, *Voices from the Camps: Vietnamese Children Seeking Asylum* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2003).

Fuller, Thomas, 'Suharto's Gulag / The Buru Island 'Humanitarian Project', *New York Times*, 15 March 2000. https://www.nytimes.com/2000/03/15/news/suhartos-gulag-the-buru-island-humanitarian-project-former-prisoners.html.

Gilley, Bruce, 'The Final Stretch', *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 18 July 1996, p. 19.

Grant, Bruce, *The Boat People: An Age Investigation* (Ringwood, Vic.: Penguin Books, 1979).

Hargyono, Sindhunata, 'Ugly Sanctuary', *Inside Indonesia*, no. 124 (April-June 2016). https://www.insideindonesia.org/ugly-sanctuary.

Hasibuan, M.S. et al., *Prajurit TNI Dalam Tugas Kemanusiaan Galang 96* (Jakarta: Markas Besar Tentara Nasional Indonesia, Pusat Sejarah, 2007).

Hobamatan, Poya, *Ketika Aku Seorang Asing Kamu Memberi Aku Tumpangan* (Pangkalpinang, Bangka: Merekonstruksi Mozaik Kemanusiaan yang Tercecer, 2001).

Howard, Richard A., 'The Role of Botanists during WWII in the Pacific Theatre', in Roy M. MacLeod (ed.), *Science and the Pacific War: Science and Survival in the Pacific, 1939–1945* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 2000), pp. 83–108.

Ismayawati, Isye, *Manusia Perahu* (Jakarta: Kompas Penerbit Buku, 2013).

Junaidi, A., 'Galang Island's Poignant Past Open to Visitors', *Jakarta Post*, 17 January 2000.

Kiernan, Ben, *Vietnam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017).

Lavina, 'Pasien Covid-19 di Wisma Atlet Bertambah 59 Orang dalam Sehari', katadata.co.id, 6 March 2022.

McBeth, John, 'Long Goodbye: Vietnamese Asylum Seekers Revolt on Island Camp', *Far Eastern Econmoic Review*, 158, no. 28 (1994), p. 16.

Missbach, Antje, 'Waiting on the Islands of "Stuckedness": Managing Asylum Seekers in Island Detention Camps in Indonesia from the Late 1970s to the Early 2000s', *ASEAS – Austrian Journal of South-East Asian Studies*, 6, no. 2 (2013), pp. 281–306.

Missbach, Antje. *Troubled Transit: Asylum Seekers Stuck in Indonesia* (Singapore: ISEAS Publishing, 2015).

Nguyen, Nathalie Huynh Chau (ed.), *New Perceptions of the Vietnam War: Essays on the War, the South Vietnamese Experience, the Diaspora and the Continuing Impact* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2015).

Passage: Journal of Refugee Education, 'Special Galang Issue' (Washington DC: Refugee Service Center, 1987), https://archive.org/details/ERIC_ED289342.

Swastiwi, Anastasia Wiwik and Asvi Warman Adam (eds), *Pulau Galang, Wajah Humanisme Indonesia: Penanganan Manusia perahu Vietnam, 1978–1996* (Jakarta: Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, Direktorat Jenderal Kebudayaan, Direktorat Sejarah dan Nilai Budaya, 2012).

Tran, Quan Tue, 'Remembering the Boat People Exodus: A Tale of Two Memorials', *Journal of Vietnamese Studies*, 7, no. 3 (2012), pp. 80–121.

Tran, Yen, 'The Closing of the Saga of the Vietnamese Asylum Seekers: The Implications on International Refugees and Human Rights Laws', *Houston Journal of Int'l Law*, 17 (1995), pp. 463–477.

Vu, Anna N. and Vic Satzewich, 'The Vietnamese Refugee Crisis of the 1970s and 1980s: A Retrospective View from NGO Resettlement Workers', *Refuge*, 32, no. 2 (2016), pp. 30–40. https://refuge.journals.yorku.ca/index.php/refuge/article/view/40245.

Yahya, Achmad Nasrudin, 'UPDATE: 43 Pasien Dirawat di RS Khusus Infeksi Covid-19 Pulau Galang', *Kompas*, https://nasional.kompas.com/read/2020/04/17/14125171/update-43-pasien-dirawat-di-rs-khusus-infeksi-covid-19-pulau-galang.

Young, Marilyn Blatt, *The Vietnam Wars, 1945–1990* (New York: HarperCollins, 1991).

Yulisman, Linda, 'Indonesia to build hospital for coronavirus patients on Galang Island', *Straits Times* 3 March 2020, https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/indonesia-picks-galang-island-near-singapore-to-treat-coronavirus-patients.

Zach, Paul, 'Indonesian Island Chosen For Refugee Processing', *The Washington Post*, 17 May 1979.

Zach, Paul, 'Refugee Relief in Indonesia', *The Washington Post*, 21 August 1979. https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1979/08/21/refugee-relief-in-indonesia-hastened-to-avoid-monsoons/f4ac7133-f5b4-456a-87e6-ddcfc09b5863/?utm_term=.3ea243714444.

Zach, Paul, 'Refugees Bring Order to Life in Camps', *The Washington Post*, 27 August 1979: https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1979/08/27/refugees-bring-order-to-life-in-camps/5b619221-66e3-45ff-a614-4b6a0d20bbcd/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.ba8e9a92a769.

Index

Note: page locators in italics denote maps and/or photos and illustrations

Adams, David 243–244
Aditjondro, George 112
Advanced Approved School (Malaya) 57
Advisory Committees (Malaya) 48, 49
Agamben, Giorgio 1, 10–11, 14, 71, 78, 176
  detention camps as form of social control 6
  Eurocentric contexts 13
  See also 'bare life'
Aidit, D.N. 123
Ambon Island 219, 221, *222*, 222–224
  massacre of Allied soldiers 223
  See also Tan Toey prisoner of war camp
Amnesty International 104, 108
  estimated number of detainees in Indonesia 85
  estimated number of detainees on Buru 90
  estimated number of detainees in Vietnam 162
  and prisoners of conscience 160, 163
Andaman Islands 68
Andō Noburo 223, 226
Anti-Imperial League (United States) 39, 40
Applebaum, Anne 173
Apter, David 179
Army, British Indian 202
Army, Indonesian (ABRI) 102
Arnold, David 66
Asia Watch Committee 162
Asō Mining Company 238
Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) 275
asylum-seeker camps 8, 78 *See also* Manus Island detention camp
Ataúro Island 100–115, 280
Australia
  and Manus Island detention camp 8, 78
  military trials for Japanese war crimes 221, 223, 232
  removal of offshore islands from 'migration zone' 12
  resettlement of Vietnamese refugees 166, 169
  soldiers 222 *See also* Gull Force
Australian Catholic Relief (ACR) 108
Australian Council for Overseas Aid, East Timor Sub-Committee 109
Australian Senate Inquiry into conditions in East Timor 109

Bacon, Augustus 37–38
Badan Pelaksanaan Pulau Buru (Buru Resettlement Implementation Body 88
Bagge, Widar 246–247
Bamboo Gulag 160–163
  oral history projects 156, 169–173
  release from 157
Barcelon, Felix 39
'bare life' 12–13, 14, 16–17
Barelang Bridge 287
Barr, Gaylord 284
Bataan Death March 202, 204
Batam Industrial Development Authority 287
Beattie-Huynh, Boi Tran 292
Bell, J. Franklin 30–31, 33, 37
beri-beri 224, 242
Bilila, Atanasio 33
Boatner, Hayden 268
Borneo
  Japanese prisoner of war camps *222*
  Sandakan prisoner of war camp 223
Boven Digoel 3, 14–15
Briggs, Harold 51, 52
Briggs Plan 52, 55
Britain *See* United Kingdom
British Malaya
  British Military Administration 48
  counter-insurgency campaigns 51
  deportation of detainees during Emergency 50–51
  Emergency Regulations Ordinance, Section 4 48

British Malaya (cont.)
Emergency Regulations Ordinance, Section 17 48, 49, 52, 53
large-scale resettlement of Chinese squatters 51–52
mass deportations to China 53
Operation Frustration 48–49
Police Interrogation Unit 55–56
population control program 43–44, 48–52, 57
rehabilitation models 56–57, 58
release of Emergency Regulation 17D detainees 55
resettlement camps/ "new villages" 4
Bureau of Non-Christian Tribes (Philippines) 36–37
Burma
convict labour at Port Blair penal settlement 68
detention memoirs 66–68, 72, 73, 77–78
military dictatorship 77
political struggles within 72, 73
Public Order (Preservation) Act 63, 64
See also Cocos Island detention camp; Ne Win government
Burma Communist Party 67
Buru Island 9, 15, *84*, 90, 124–125, 280
agricultural cultivation 90–91
children on 89
collective punishment 92
deaths from illnesses 91
detainee self-sufficiency principles 73
dismantling of camps 96
effect of harsh conditions on women and children 95–96
establishment of new villages for families 82, 95
estimated number of detainees 83, 90
expectations of detainees 16
lack on documentation about women and children 93–94
as resettlement for Category B prisoners 88
responsibilities for day-to-day operations 88–89
as site of largest arbitrary detention 97
as site of 'special transmigration' 88
ways authorities used to create friendlier image 90–91
Buru Island: A Prison Memoir (Setiawan, 2020) 93–94
Buru Resettlement Implementation Body (*Badan Pelaksanaan Pulau Buru*) 88

cai tao tu tuong (thought reform) 160
Cambodia 275
estimated number of people fleeing after 1975 274
camps, history and definition 1–2
carceral geography 10, 11
carceral islands 66
Carruthers, Ashley 285, 292
Central Review Commission (Malaya) 50, 55
Centre for Strategic and International Studies (Indonesia) 109
Chaffee, Adna 30
Chan Tun Aung, U 70
Changi prisoner of war camp 200, 204, 210
Chen Quanguo 186
Chiêu Hoi ('Open Arms') program 157
children
deaths on Ataúro Island 114
in Galang Refugee Transit Camp 281, 286
internment on Ataúro Island 107
in re-education camps (Vietnam) 162–163
treatment in detention camps (Indonesia) 95–96, 149–150, 151
China
deportation of Malayan detainees to 50–51, 53
See also People's Republic of China
Chinese Communist Party (CCP)
laojiao (re-education through labour') 181
mass detention program in Xinjiang 175
thought reform (*sixiang gaizao*) policies 178–180
Yan'an Rectification Campaign (1943–1944) 178–179, 189
Chinese People's Volunteer Army prisoners of war 257n
Chit Yi, Maung 67, 70, 73, 74n, 76
Civil War, American 2, 28
Clark, Mark W. 267
Coco Islands *63 See also* Cocos Islands

Cocos Island 63n
reclassification as military territory 71
Cocos Island detention camp 7, 15, 68–72
closure 75
conditions in 74–75
detainees launch collective political action 74–75, 76
detainees' transfer back to mainland 76
hunger strikes 77
isolation policy 71
as 'new jail' 70
reopened for political dissidents 77
Cold War 254
Colson, Charles F. 267
command responsibility 219, 221, 225, 233–234
Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation in East Timor (Comissão de Acolhimneto, Verdade e Reconciliação de Timor Leste, CAVR) 101
Committee on Territories (United States) 36
Committee to Protect Journalists 162
Committees of Review (Malaya) 49, 55
compassion fatigue 282
Comprehensive Plan of Action for Indochinese Refugees 282, 283, 284, 286
US government investigation into 285
concentration camps
Philippine–American War 26, 29, 31, 34, 39
Nazi 48
South African 39–40
See also zones of protection
Confucianism 178
Counter-Intelligence Corps (CIC) 261–262, 264, 272–273
Crush Malaysia Command (Kogam) 124
Cuba, *reconcentrados* in 35, 36, 39
Cuban War of Independence (1895–98) 26–27
Cultural Revolution, Chinese (1966–76) 180
curfews 32–33

Dai-nichi maru 241
Danno Kazuo 249
dark tourism 288, 292–293
Darul Islam movement 128
deculturation 5, 180, 186, 188–189, 191
Democratic People's Republic of Korea 255
Denney, Stephen 170
Deportations (from Malaya) 50–51, 53, 57
See also repatriations
Desbarats, Jacqueline 162
detainees
Burmese detention memoirs 66–68, 72, 73, 77–78
detention without trial 157
disempowerment 14–16
held under section five (Burma) 63, 64, 70
rehabilitation models 56–57
restoration of special privileges 75–76
revocation of special privileges 71
right to lodge objection to detention 48, 54
social status of former 113
state-sanctioned discrimination, post-release 120
surveillance after release 96–97, 100–101, 112, 167
See also women detainees
detain/kill detention camps 121, 124, *131*, 141
eyewitness accounts 129–130
known sites in Aceh 130–133
detention, rationalising 8–10
detention camps
Burmese islands as 68–72
challenges of keeping detainees in order 17
complex hierarchies within 17
core elements 15
deaths in 145, 199, 200
difference from institutions of territorial segregation 14
difference from prisons 3, 71–72
disempowerment of detainees 14–16
forms of violence 142, 146
historiography 6–7
as places of resistance 43, 58
portrayal as resettlement areas 83
race-centred approach 6, 7
reasons for holding people 1
seen through 'world-system' theory 11–12
separation of interrogation centres from 137, 140, 145–151

detention camps (cont.)
as social and political control tools 3, 6, 12
source of forced labour 16, 64
special characteristics 14, 15
torture in 140, 141–142
treatment of women and children 149–150, 151
use of coercive tactics in rehabilitation 43
See also long-term detention camps; short-term detention camps
detention memoirs
Burmese 66–68, 72, 73, 77–78
Indonesian 93
post-war 200
republication of 77–78
Vietnamese 158–159, 162, 170
women's accounts 171–172
detention without trial
Category B and C prisoners 87
mental stress from 158
Vietnamese 157, 170
Diburu di Pulau Buru (Setiawan, 2006) 93
diffuse carceral model 10, 11
Dirjosutanto, Alexander 91n
Discipline and Punish (Foucault, 1977) 10
Djuarsa, Ishak 127–128, 129
Dodd, Francis T. 267
Dossier on East Timor, March 1982 109–110
Dower, John 212
Drea, Edward 203
Dunlop. E.E. 209–210

East Timor *101*
Indonesian occupation 100, 102–103
locations for detainee internment 104
See also Timor Leste
Ellis, Burton 251
Emergency Regulations Ordinance (Malaya)
population control 48–52, 55
mass deportations under 53
cancellation of 17c orders 57
Engelhart, Carl 248, 249, 251

FALINTIL (Forças Armadas de Libertação Nacional de Timor-Leste) 102
Falun gong 180, 184
Far Eastern Economic Review 287
Federation of Malaya 43, 44
Federer, Maria do Céu Lopes de Silva 112, 113
Fernandes, Clinton 108
Fields, Rona 284
Philippine Republic, First 27
Fong Chian 57
Forças Armadas de Libertação Nacional de Timor-Leste (FALINTIL) 102
forced labour, detention camps as source 16, 125
Forsberg, Henry 250
Fossey, William 249, 250
Foucault, Michel 1, 6, 10 *See also* diffuse carceral model
France, Poulo Condore penal settlement 69–70
Francis Xavier Nguyen Van Thuan 169
Franco–Prussian War 2
Freeman, James 278, 283, 285
French Revolutionary Wars 2
Frente Revolucionária de Timor-Leste Independente (FRETILIN) 102
Fukuoka 1 camp 239, 240, 241
Allied POWs' recollections of conditions 241–243
estimated number of detainees 248n, 251, 252
food rations 241
punishment regime 243–244, 250
relocations 245
Fukuoka prisoner of war (POW) camps *240*
access to Red Cross food packages 241, 247–248, 249
Allied bombing 251
branch/dispatch camps 240, 241
deaths in 247, 249
Dutch prisoners 245–246, 247, 248
quality of camp staff 249–250
relocations 247

Galang Island 275, *277*
Bodhi tree *292*
construction of camps on 280–281
construction of COVID-19 Specialist Hospital 294
detention camp for Japanese POWs 279

factors for being chosen as processing centre 279
memorials on 290–293
as site for pilgrimage 293
Vietnamese diplomatic protest to remove memorials 293–294
Galang Refugee Transit Camp 275
closure 287–288
departments responsibility for running 280
extortion and corruption 283–284, 285
inadequacies in processing systems 283–284
number of refugees processed in 276
official account of history 276–277
photo documentation of arrivals *284*
redevelopment as tourist park 287–290
violence and unrest in 286
Galang Tourist Park 288–290
Boat People Plaza *289*, 293
closure 294
lack of international signage 289–290
Galang Vietnamese Refugee Camp 281–286
Garcia, Galixtro 243
gated communities 11, 14
Gavaghan, Terence 281
gender
difference in evaluation of male and female prisoners of war 264–265
Korean combatants and civilians 259–262
stereotypes and expectations of female POWs 269–271
support roles for women in US Army 264
General Orders Number 100 (Philippines) *28–29*, 29, 40
Geneva Accords on Vietnam 1954 163–166
Geneva Convention on Prisoners of War, 1929 9, 227, 243
Article 11 203–204
Article 75 15
Geneva Convention Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War, 1949 258
Article 14 259
Gerakan Pengacau Keamanan (GPK) 106
Gerakan Tiga Puluh September (G30S) 84, 122–123
Gerry, John 108
Gerwani (Gerakan Wanita Indonesia) 138
Goodpasture Jr, John Albert 237–*238*, 248, 251
Grant, Lachlan 212
Great Cocos Island *See* Cocos Island
Great Leap Forward (1958–1962) 180
Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity Scheme 207
Greek communist movement 56
Guantánamo Bay detention camp 5, 12
guerilla warfare 28
Filipino 27, 32, 37
use of family and kinship networks for survival 103
Guevarra, Juan 33
Gulag, estimated number of prisoners 4
Gull Force 222
Gunung Sahari interrogation centre 137–138, 140, 143

Habibie, B.J. 287
Hahm Jin-ok 269
Hainan Island 229
Hamada Hiroshi 244
Han ethnic group 175, 190–191
Harrell, Stevan 180
Hastings, Peter 109
Herren, Thomas 264, *269*
Hersri Setiawan 93–94, 95–96
High Commissioner in Council (Malaya) 51
Hla, Ludu U 67
Hoa (Vietnamese female detainee) 166–167, 169–170, 171
Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life (Agamben, 1998) 10
Hong Anh Nguyen 283
Hong Kong
Allied prisoner of war camps 202, 203, 209
refugee camps 286
Hoten #2 camp (Manchuria) 210
Hsian Camp (Taiwan) 210, 211
Htun Daily 67
Hughes, Robert P. 30
Hui Muslims 191
Human Rights Watch 158, 163, 184
Humanity (*Tính Nhân Loai*) memorial 290, *291*, 293

hunger strikes
Cocos Island detention camp 75, 76, 77
Pusan Camp 1 266
Huynh-Beattie, Boitran 285
Huu, Nguyen Dinh 278, 283, 285

Ikeuchi Masakiyo 224, 230, 232
Imperial Japanese Army 240, 241, 256
Imperial Japanese Navy 221
fleets in charge of Tan Toey camp 223
Tokkeitai 232
personnel prosecuted in war crime tribunals 219, 220–222, 224–226
Indian National Army 202–203
Indochina War, First 3–4
Indochina War, Second 156
re-education camps during 159–160
Indonesia *121*
1966 Presidential Instruction 86
agreement to provide temporary refugee transit camps 275–276
Batam Industrial Development Authority 287
bonded zone 287
classification of detainee families as transmigrants 96
camps for mass killing of communists 10
'clean environment' (*bersih lingkungan*) policy 120n
concerns about refugees impacting community and culture 279
criminal procedural processes 1960s 150, 153
detention as resettlement strategy 83
detention strategies during communist insurgency 9
estimated number of communists killed 139
estimated number of detainees 85–86
estimated number of people killed 1965–1966 84–85, 132
goodwill between international partners and 281
Java and Bali *139*, 209–210, 241
known detention and kill sites in Aceh 130–133
location of interrogation and torture centres 142–145, 146
Management Committee for Vietnamese Refugees (Panitia Pengelolaan Pengungsi Vietnam, P3V) 280
mass detention campaign 82
military trials 87
refugees on Anambas archipelago 278
reporting on humanitarian breaches on Galang Island 277–278
response to Vietnamese refugee problem 278–281
scope of arbitrary detention 92–97
torture centres 137–138, 140, 143
See also Buru Island; Galang Island; Galang Refugee Transit Camp
Indonesia occupation of East Timor 100–102
campaign of invasion 102–103
international pressure on human rights 108
isolation policy 101
military training manuals 105–106
Operation Security (*Operasi Keamanan*) 103–104
pressure from international agencies 111–112, 114–115
relaxation of restricted access to East Timor 109, 110–111
restriction of access to East Timor 108–109
See also Ataúro Island
Indonesian Communist Party *See* Partai Komunis Indonesia (PKI)
Indonesian genocide 119, 122–124
estimated number of people killed 1965–1966 84–85, 132
internal military documentation of killings 126
See also Indonesian New Order regime
Indonesian Left
destruction of 82, 84–86, 152–153
New Order treatment 97, 119–122
Indonesian Military Regional Defence Joint Command 294
Indonesian New Order regime 77, 82
Annihilation Operation 122, 126–127, 129, 133

detain/kill detention camps 121–122
internal documentation of killings 126
Kalong Operation (Operation Bat) 149
killing sites 129–130
mass killings 1965–1966 83, 119, *129*
Pancasila ideology 92–93, 97
Pattimura Division 88–89
propaganda 119–120, 126, 140–141
public killings 132n
transmigration policies 83, 87
ways to keep track of mass killings 132–133
Indonesian Red Cross 111
Indonesian Women's Movement *See* Gerwani (Gerakan Wanita Indonesia)
Instructions for the Government of the United States Army in the Field 28 *See also* General Orders Number 100; Lieber Code
International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) 91, 109, 229, 246, 266, 278, 281
assessment of East Timor 110–111
visits to Fukuoka prisoner of war camps 241n
international humanitarian law 6–7
protection for civilians 40–41
storage of munitions in prisoner of war camps 224
International Military Tribunal for the Far East (IMTFE) 220
interrogation and torture centres 142–145
feared interrogators 148, 149
functionalist and intentional elements 152–153
separation from detention camps 137, 140, 145–151, 152
specialised 149
survivors' testimonies 146, 148n, 149n
See also Gunung Sahari interrogation centre
investigative historians and journalists, role in exposing condition in camps 6–7
Ipoh Detention Camp 53–54
establishment of interrogation units 55

Japan
1938 National Labour Mobilisation Law 239
24th Naval Base Force (2nd Southern Area Expeditionary Fleet) 223
atomic bomb dropped in Hiroshima 251
blocking Red Cross access to camps 8
causes of death during WWII 227–229
National Labour Mobilisation Law, 1938 239
Patriotic National Labour Cooperation Ordinance 239
Prisoner of War Information Bureau 239
Prisoner of War Management Office 239
rationing during WWII 203, 215
Sweden as Protecting Power for Dutch in 246
use of social segregation as reason for detention 9
War Ministry policies 239
work labour policies 206–212
Japanese military authorities (occupied territories)
food supplies situation 227–228
invasion of Ambon Island 219, 222–224
policy on labour by white prisoners 207–208
recruitment of Korean and Taiwanese civilian auxiliaries 205
style of discipline 226–227, 233, 244–245
treatment of Asian and Allied soldiers 202–203
troops in China 205
use of forced labour 16, 220, 238, 239, 245–246
ways of demonstrating superiority 207, 208, 212–213
See also Imperial Japanese Army; Imperial Japanese Navy
Japanese prisoner of war camps 14, 16, 209, 210
Ambon and Borneo *222*
Changi camp 200, 204, 210
complex structures 205
dangerous work sites 209
deaths in 199, 200, 204, 220, 221, 251
deaths, official cause 224
disempowerment of European prisoners in 14
in East Asia *206*, 210–211
estimated number of internees 215

Japanese prisoner of war camps (cont.)
European civilians interned 202
in Japan 211, 212, 214
labour sites in Japan 208
Omi Camp (Niigata Prefecture) 204–205, 206
putting prisoners to work 206–212
quality of camp staff 205, 230, 244, 252
reasons for conflicting accounts of conditions 238–239
reasons for variations in conditions 200, 206, 210
release of Asian soldiers 202, 203, 219–220
scope of documentation about 8
senior officers 210–212
Stanley camp 204
targeted in Allied air raids 224
torture and punishment of Allied soldiers 223
under War Minister's purview 237
See also Fukuoka 1; Fukuoka prisoner of war (POW) camps
Java *139*
Allied soldiers captured in 241
camp conditions 209–210
Jeans, Simon 285
jiaoyu zhuanhua (transformation through education) 187–188
Johnson, Burlingame 36
Jong, L. de 202
judicial punishment 3

Kadir, Ibrahim 121–122, 127–129, 133
Kammen, Douglas 144
Katsura Takeo 243, 250, 251
Kazakhs 175–176, 191
Kenpeitai 232
Kenya *See* Mau Mau uprising
Khin Maung Pyu, U 71
Kim Il-sung 255, 257
Kim Jong Ja 267, *269*
Kim Jong Sook 267, *269*
Kim Jŏng-yu 264
King, Edward P. 202, 211
Kinkaseki Copper Mine (Taiwan) 209
Ko Ko Lay 67, 69n, 74, 76–77
Kŏje Island (Kŏje-do) 17, 257, 263
Dodd Incident 267–268
violence between repatriate and non-repatriate POWs 266–270, 272
Komalasakti, Burhan 149
Komando Daerah Militer (Kodam) 143
Komando Distrik Militer (Kodim)
interrogation and torture centres 143
Komando Rayon Militer (Koramil) 94
Kopkamtib (Komando Operasi Pemulihan Keamanan dan Ketertiban) 82, 88, 90, 97, 144
Policy for the Solution for Prisoners/Detainees of G30S PKI 87
prisoner categorisation system 86–87
Korea *256*
liberation from Japanese colonial rule 255
Korea, Republic of 255
Korean women prisoners of war (POWs) 254, 257–258
conditions in camps 263
women used as nurses and aides 264
mix of civilians and refugees among 258
relocation to Kŏje Island 266–268
seen through Western anti-communist trope 270, 273
stereotypes and expectations 269–271
US Army reluctance to recognise female POWs as combatants 258–259, 263–264
Korean War 4, 254, 255–259
Allied Translator and Interpreter Section reports 265
armistice negotiations 265–266, 267, 272
Chinese People's Volunteer Army joins 257
complex make up of prisoners in camps 17
Operation ALBANY 257–258
Operation SCATTER screening program 266–267
Operation SPREADOUT 268, 271
Pusan Perimeter 257
Women detainees 258

See also Kŏje Island (Kŏje-do); Pusan Camp 1
Koreans
forced detention after Kanto earthquake (1923) 9
forced relocation to Japan for labour 239
Koti Command 124n
Kumamoto Branch Camp 241n8 *See also* Fukuoka 1
Kuomintang 256, 257

Lanzin (newspaper) 67
laogai (prison labour camps) 5n, 181–185
laojiao ('re-education through labour') 5, 181
abolition 184–185
reformation rate 183
variations in implementation 181–182
Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps (Bingtuan) 182–183
Lee Chan Sung 261
Lerch, Archer L. 238
Lieber Code *28*
Life 268
Lifton, Robert 177
literature *See* detention memoirs
Lodge, Henry Cabot 36
Long March (1934–35) 178
long-term detention camps 120, 124, 132 *See also* Buru Island
Lopes, Martinho de Costa 108, 109
Lost Years; My 1,632 Days in Vietnamese Reeducation Camps (Tran) 158–159
Ludu/ The People monthly 67, 67n

MacArthur, Arthur, General 28
MacArthur, Douglas, General 257
Magno, Durvalina Belo 112–113
Mai Gia Thuoc 164
Majeedi detention camp 54
establishment of interrogation units 55
rehabilitation of female detainees 57
Makronissos camp, Greece 56
Malaya 4, *45*
British counter-insurgency strategies 9, 43
Chinese squatter settlements 45–46, 47
Chinese support for guerilla groups 47
collective detention 53–54
creation of resettlement camps/'new villages' 4
decrease in detention numbers 52–53
deportation of detainees to China 50
ethnic population in 46
Ipoh Detention Centre 53–4, 55
legal basis for population control 48
New Villages in Seremban 53
purpose-built camps 53
race-centred population control 44
Special Camp 54
See also British colonial authorities in Malaya
Malayan Chinese 56–57
Malayan Chinese Association 55
Malayan Communist Party 43, 44–45, 48–49
Chinese membership 46
post-war activities (1946–48) 45
Malayan Emergency 43, 44, 46
Malayan National Liberation Army 46–47, 57
Malayan Union 44 *See also* Federation of Malaya
Malaysia
number of refugees processed 276
state of refugee camps 286
turns away Vietnamese refugees 278, 282
Malik, Jacob 256
Malvar, Miguel 37
Management Committee for Vietnamese Refugees (Panitia Pengelolaan Pengungsi Vietnam, P3V) 280
extortion and corruption 283–284
Manus Island detention camp 78
Mao Zedong 178–179, 189, 255, 257
mass detention 2, 3
Mass Organisation (Min Yuen) (Malaya) 47
Matsunaga Shigenori 250
Mau Mau uprising 4, 8
Maung Maung, Brigadier General 71
May, Glenn A. 34
McBeth, John 286
McCarthy, Susan 190–191
McIntosh, James Robert 249
McKelvey, Robert 157n

McKinley, William 26–27, 40
Médecins Sans Frontières 281
media
  lack of reporting on Indonesian massacres 85
  US Army allows limited access to prisoner of war camps 267–268
Mencius (philosopher) 178
Metcalf, Robert 241, 243
Miles, Nelson A. 35–36
military Provost Courts (Philippines) 33
military tribunals
  Japanese war crimes 219, 220–222, 224–226, 232
  Indonesian 87
Min Yuen (Mass Organisation)47
Missbach, Antje 275
Mitsubishi Mining Company 238
Mitsui Mining Company 245, 246
Miyazaki Yoshio 230, 232
Morotai Island 225
Moss, Edwin 251
Mountz, Alison 78
Mouravieff, Dick 246
Movement for Democracy and Human Rights (Netherlands) 106
Munandi, Pak 146, 148, 149
Muslim ethnic minorities
  deculturation 5, 180, 186, 188–189, 191
  mass detention 175–176, 187
  See also Kazakhs; Uyghurs
Mya Than, Thakin 67
Myanmar 63n *See also* Burma
Myint Kyaw 67, 73, 74–75

Nationalist Party, Chinese (Kuomintang) 46
Nazi Germany concentration camps 4, 6, 10
  Agamben on 10–11
  complex hierarchies within 17
  scope of documentation about 8
Ne Win, Maung (author) 67
Ne Win government 64, 65
  District Jail in the Hanthawaddy District 70
Netherlands Indies 222
  detention camps in Boven Digoel 3, 14–15
  Herziene Indonesisch Reglement (Revised Regulation for Indonesians) 150n
  use of penal settlements as form of transmigration 87
Neukomm, Cedrick 109
New Guinea 3, 14–15 *See also* Boven Digoel
"New Villages" 4, 43, 44, 47
  curfews 52
  spatial segregation infrastructure 58–59
  tight controls on food and movement in 51–52, 57
Ngo Dinh Nhu 165
Ngo Dinh Diem 165
Nguyen, Kien 162
Nguyen Chi Thien 160
Nguyen Dinh Huu 278, 283, 285
Nguyen Manh Tien 163–164, 166, 169, 170
Nguyen Tu 157
Nguyen Van Canh 160, 161–162
Nguyen Van Tuyen 290
Nguyen Viet Huy 164–165, 166, 170
Nippon Mining Company 245
Nippon Times 268–269
Noakes, Stephen 185
North, William 242, 250
North Korea, voluntary repatriations of POWs 266
North Korean People's Army 254
  ambivalence about role of women in war 271
  complex mixture of people in 255, *256*
  female soldiers in 261
  propaganda targeted at *260*

Odajima Tadashi 205, 212
Ohn Myint, Thakin 67
Oosterhuis, J. 245–246, 247, 248
Open Arms program (*Chiêu Hoi*) 157
Operation ALBANY 257–258
oral history interviews 101, 112–114
  on detain/kill detention camps 130–131
  with Ibrahim Kadir 127–129
oral history projects 156, 160, 169–173
  as form of remembrance and commemoration 173

Pak Ok Soon 264–265
Pak Soo Pok 267, *269*

Pancasila ideology 92–93, 97
Parti Kebangsaan Melayu Malaya 49
Partai Komunis Indonesia (PKI) 82–83
  blamed for 1965 coup 84–85, 122, 138–139
  mass arrests, interrogation and torture of members 137
  mass killings of members and associates 119, 123–124, 125–126
Pe Htay, Thakin 67, 75
Pemuda Rakyat 148
penal settlements 69–70
  exploratory survey in Andaman Island group 65
  as form of transmigration 87
  Port Blair 68
  See also Buru Island; Cocos Island detention camp
People's Republic of China *177*
  abolition o*f laojiao* 184–185
  administrative disciplinary action ratification 181
  constitution 184
  Cultural Revolution 180, 182
  de-radicalisation measures 186, 187
  detention of Uyghurs in 're-education' camps 5
  groups targeted for extrajudicial thought reform 184–185
  history of extrajudicial detention 176, 177
  ideological totalism 177–178
  National People's Congress 181, 184, 187
  pathologisation of dissent 175, 180, 189, 190–191
  prison labour camp (*laogai*) 5n, 181–185
  refusal to allow access to Uyghur re-education camps 8
  Social Credit system 13
  transformation through education (*jiaoyu zhuanhua*) 187–188
  transformative logic (*ganhua*) 178, 180, 181, 185
  'war of terror' 176, 180, 186, 191
Percival, A.E. 201, 211
Perks, Robert 172
Pertamina 287
Philippine–American War (1899–1902) 25
Philippines under United States rule 27–29, *28*
  builds reconcentration into governance structure 25, 38
  cholera epidemics 38
  military Provost Courts 33
  primary locations of resistance to US 27–29
  reconcentration orders to deal with guerilla warfare 28–38
Philippines Commission 25
  Reconcentration Act 1903 26, 38
Philippines reconcentration (1901–1902) 29–38
  destruction outside of reconcentration camps 37–38
  inspection of camps 34
  investigation into war crimes committed by US Army 36
  Luzon camps 30–31
  Marinduque and Samar camps 29–30
  mortality rates 34
  purpose of 31
  smallpox outbreak 33, 35
  ways US Army managed camps 33–34
  zones of protection 31–33
Pitzer, Andrea 176, 183–184
political order, through prism of island detention paradigm 78–79
political prisoners 151n
  detention without trial 124
  estimated number 138–139
  government surveillance 158
  Indonesian *See tahanan politik* (*tapol*)
  Vietnamese 160, 163
  women 138–139, 143, 147
Poorten, Hein ter 201
population control program, Malayan 43–44
Prescott Barrows, David 36–37
'Presidential Instruction No. 9 (*Keputusan Presiden No. 9/KOGAM/5/1996*) 125
preventive detention *See* refugee camps
prison labour camps, China (*laogai*) 5n, 181–185
prison memoirs *See* detention memoirs

prisoner categorisation system 86–87, 139, 144, 152
Category A prisoner 86–87, 89
Category A prisoner mass killings 125
Category B prisoners 87, 88, 89, 92, 125
Category C prisoners 87, 89, 125
Category C subgroups 144
Prisoner of War Information Bureau 244, 251
prisoner of war (POW) camps 199–200, 209
First and Second World Wars 3–4, 16
See also Japanese prisoner of war camps
prisoners of war (POWs), Allied 199, 212–213, 219
accounts of camp conditions 238–239
attitudes toward Asians in colonial context 244–245
captured in South-East Asia 201
discipline and punishment methods 226–227
Dutch 202
estimated number 200n, 201n
leadership and impact on survival 231–232
massacres of 223
misconceptions about living conditions of 213–214
reasons for mistreatment 214–215
recollections of conditions in Fukuoka camps 241–243, 245–246
as source of labour 220, 238, 239, 245–246
transfer to Hainan Island 229, 230
transfer to Manchuria and Taiwan 210–211
See also Thailand–Burma Railway
prisoners of war (POWs) 200–206, 259
Asian captives used as military labour 215
captured in South-East Asia 201
complex hierarchies among 17
dangerous work sites 209
female 254
gendered notions of combatants 259–262
kidnapping of American camp commander 17
reasons for transfer to Japan 239
See also Allied prisoners of war (POWs); Korean female prisoners of war (POWs)
prisons 10
difference from detention camps 3, 71–72
Pritchard, Joel 281
propaganda
aimed at North Korean soldiers *260*
Indonesian military 119–120, 126, 140–141
Provost Courts (military) 33
Psychological Warfare College, Dalat 165
Public Order (Preservation) Act (Burma) 63, 64
Puisi Tak Terkuburkan (2000) 121n
Pusan Camp 1 263, 266
sexual activity and pregnancies 265

Quan Tue Tran 294
Quang Trung Training Centre 168
Quy (Vietnamese female detainee) 167–168, 169, 171

race-centred approach, population control program 44
racism, as factor in detention camps 6, 7
rape in detention camps 17, 94, 285, 291, 292
'receipting' (*bon*) documents 132–133
Reconcentration Act 1903 25, 26, 38
reconcentration orders 25, 26, 27 *See also* concentration camps
reducción 176
re-education camps (China) 188–189
rehabilitation models 179–180
re-education camps (Vietnam) 156–157
conditions in 170–171
death of detainees 164, 170
detainees' narratives 169–173
estimated number of people in 157
during Indochina War 159–160
men and women's accounts of experiences 171
movement of detainees between 164, 168, 170
purpose of frequent detainee transfers 170

size of 161–162
See also Bamboo Gulag
re-education through labour (*laojiao*) *See* *laojiao* ('re-education through labour')
refugee camps 5, 286
refugees
change in refugee status 282
See also asylum-seekers; Vietnamese refugees
Regulation 18B of the Defence (General) Regulations 1939 (UK) 48
Rehabilitation Camp (Malaya) 50
rehabilitation models, use during Malayan Emergency 48
repatriations 50–51, 266, 286, 287
Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces 164
resettlement camps
families of detainees transferred to 92–93
as form of transmigration 87–88
Rhee, Syngman 255
Riley, Robin 269–270
Roosa, John 141, 151, 152
Roosevelt, Franklin 255
Roosevelt, Theodore 27, 36
Root, Elihu 40
Roscoe, Katherine 66
Rosjadi, Imam 93
Royal Air Force 21st Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment 241
Russo–Japanese War, treatment of POWs during 212

Sagan, Ginetta 170
Saich, Tony 179
Sakamoto Yuhichi 241, 242, 243–244
Sapebiman (Burma Translation Society) Prize 67n
Saunders, Martin D.S. 241, 242, 243, 244
Scarry, Elaine 141
Schwartz, Jack 248, 251
sexual violence, against Vietnamese refugees 274, 278, 285–286, 291–292
Shein Than, U 78
Shirozu Wadami 221–222, 223
delegation of command to juniors 230–231
on discipline of prisoners 226–227
factors outside control of 221–222, 233
sentenced to death 232, 233
war crime tribunal 224–226
short-term detention camps 121–122 *See also* detain/kill detention camps
Shue, Vivienne 176
Siti, Ibu 151
Silva, Maria 111
Singapore
bonded zone 287
Changi camp 200, 204, 210
ethnic population in 44
slave labour camps 16, 125
Sleeman, Colin 230
Smith, Fred A. 30
social segregation 1, 8, 9, 13
detention camps 3, 6, 12
spatial segregation infrastructure 47–48, 52, 58
Soegih Arto 88
Songkurai (No. 2) Camp 231
Sutowo, Ibnu 287
South African War (1899–1902) 26
Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry into concentration camps 39–40
Soviet Union
Gulag 4
use of forced labour 16
Spanish Claims Commission 40
Spanish colonisation methods 176
spatial segregation infrastructure 47–48
Sri Rahayu 94
Stalin, Joseph 255
state of exception 10, 176
'strategic hamlets', Vietnam 4
Sudjinah, Ibu 138, 140, 142, 143, 149, 152
Suharto, President 88
Suharto government 93, 122
crushes G30S group 84
Presidential Decree No. 38 279–280
See also Kopkamtib (Komando Operasi Pemulihan Keamanan dan Ketertiban
Sukarno government 84, 86, 123
Pancasila ideology 92–93
Sulami, Ibu 138, 143

tahanan politik (*tapol*) 83, 86
detention without trial 124
mistreatment on Buru Island 91–92, 97
resettlement on Buru Island 89–92

Taiping Rehabilitation Camp 56–57
Takamatsu Mining Company 245
Takasaki Masamitsu 232, 233
Takengon (Central Aceh) 121–122
  interview with Kadir 127–129
Tan Toey prisoner of war camp
  deaths in 221
  discipline and punishment methods 226–227
  problematic command structure 229–232
Tanaka, Yuki 200n
TAPOL 101n, 124
Tati, Ibu 147–148, 149–150
Taylor, John G. 103
Templer, Gerald 52
Thailand
  number of refugees processed 276
  state of refugee camps 286
Thailand–Burma Railway 16, 208–209
  death rates 209
  use of non-commissioned officers (NCOs) 230–231
Thanh Tam Tuyen 157
Thao Truong 157
Thein Pe Myint 67
Thich Phouc Sung 285
30th September Movement *See Gerakan Tiga Puluh September* (G30S)
Thomson, Alistair 172
Thornton, Patricia 176
thought reform (*cai tao tu tuong*) 160
thought reform (*sixiang gaizao*) 178–180
Three Ladies Shrine (*Miêu Ba Cô*) *292*, 293
Thu Duc Military Academy 158
Timor Information Service 104, 108
Timor Leste *101*
Timor Newsletter 106
Tinh Nhan 291, 293
Tōjō Hideki 206–212
Tokkeitai 232, 233
Tokyo War Crimes Trial 199, 200
torture
  Allied prisoners of war 223
  Indonesia 139
  methods of 147, 171
  Vietnamese refugees 285
  as way of army claiming legitimacy 140, 141–142, 152
Tossed Down by the Rising Waves (Sudjinah) 138
tourism 288, 292–293
Tran Da Tu 157
Tran Tri Vu 158–159, 162, 170
transformation through education (*jiaoyu zhuanhua*) 187–188
transmigration policies 83, 87
Truman, Harry S. 256
Tsukada Osamu 228
Tu Weiming 178

United Kingdom
  Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry into South African concentration camps 39–40
  use of carceral islands 66, 68, 69
  destruction of records of detention camp systems in Kenya 8
  use of detention camps in Mau Mau uprising 4
  use of social segregation as reason for detention 9
  and Greek communist movement 56
  Regulation 18B of the Defence (General) Regulations 1939 48
United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) 275, 276, 278, 281
  change in refugee resettlement processing 282
  See also Comprehensive Plan of Action for Indochinese Refugees
United Nations Refugee Convention, 1951 274, 275
United Nations (UN) Forces 254
  capture of Korean prisoners of war 257–258
  delegates authorise US to oppose North Korea's invasion 256
United States
  acquisition of Philippines 27–29
  benevolent assimilation policy in Philippines 27
  Guantánamo Bay detention camp 5
  internment of citizens of Japanese descent 4
  legitimation of reconcentration orders 40–41

Lodge Committee investigation into war crimes in Philippines 36, 37
Orderly Departure Program 169, 172
Pacific War unrestricted submarine warfare 228
paternalistic attitudes towards Korea 255
removal of Guantánamo Bay from US constitution 12
resettlement camps/'strategic hamlets' in Vietnam 4
Senate Committee on the Philippines 36
use of social segregation as reason for detention 9
war against Spain 26–27
United States Army
allows press limited access to prisoner of war camps 267–268
ambivalence towards Korean female prisoners of war 258–259, 263–264, 270–271
capture of Korean prisoners of war 254–255, 257–258
counter-intelligence posters for US soldiers 261–*262*
Korean women POWs are nurses and aides 264
Korean War propaganda *260*
lack of reporting on reconcentration camps 39, 40
military code, 1863 28
Operation ALBANY 257–258
Operation SCATTER screening program 266–267
Operation SPREADOUT 268, 271
reconcentration camps management 33–34
reconcentration orders 25, 26, 27
Women's Army Corps 264
Universal Declaration of Human Rights 184
Utsumi Aiko *200*
Uyghurs 180
demonisation 191
mass detention 175–176
re-education camps 188–189
Vietnam
anti-intellectual campaign 157
diplomatic protest to remove memorials on Galang Island 293–294
estimated number of people who fled after 1975 161, 274
government lies about re-education camps 169–170
government's ways to silence dissidents 158
location of re-education camps *159*
New Economic Zone 160–161, 164–165
ongoing imprisonment of dissidents 163
poisoning of political detainees in jail 74
Re-education Act No. 49 160
re-education camps post-1975 9
refugees repatriated to 276
refusal to accept forced repatriation of refugees 286
refusal to acknowledge re-education camp history 172–173
resettlement camps/'strategic hamlets' 4
Women's Armed Forces Corps School 166, 167, 168
Vietnamese refugees
deaths at sea 275, 282
escape by boat 169, 172, 275
forced repatriation 286, 287
Indonesian response 278–281
refugee status change 282
sexual violence against 274, 278, 285–286, 291–292
Vo, Nghia 162, 171
Vu Hoai Duc 165–166, 170, 171

Wagner, Arthur L. 31, 33, 34, 35
Lodge Committee investigation into war crimes in Philippines 37
Wainwright, Jonathan M. 202, 211
Wakabayashi, Bob Tadashi 201
Wake Island, capture of American civilians 245
Walker, Walton 257
Wallerstein, Immanuel 1, 7, 11–12, 13 *See also* 'world-system' theory

war crime tribunals 219, 220–222, 224–226
See also Shirozu Wadami
Washington Post 279
Wehrmacht prisoner-of-war camp 10
Weintraub, Stanley 265, 266–267, 270
Wheaton, Loyd 32, 37
Whitlam, Gough 109
Wibisono, Kunto 280, 281
Wilson, Helen 39
Wirz, Henry 2–3
women
detention camps in Indonesia 92
East Timorese oral history interviews 112–114
experience in Bamboo Gulag 156, 171–172
Indonesian memorials marking cases of violence 274
internment on Ataúro Island 107
Korean prisoners of war 258, 263
political prisoners 138–139, 143, 147
prisoners of war (POWs) 254
rapes in detention centres 17, 94, 285, 291, 292
reasons for going to Buru Island 94–95
re-education camp accounts (Vietnam) 163, 166–171
sexual activity and pregnancies in prisoner of war camps 265
sexual violence against 274, 285–286, 291–292
as source of labour for Japanese war economy 239
stereotypes and expectations 269–271
supportive roles for women in US Army 264
trauma of displacement 113–114
treatment in detention camps 149–150, 151
as victims of New Order resettlement policies 95–96
Women's Armed Forces Corps School 166, 167, 168
World War II
Great Tokyo Air Raid 250
Japanese prisoner of war camps 14, 16
See also Japan; Pacific War
'world-system' theory 1, 7, 11–12

Xi Jinping 175, 185, 186, 188, 191
Xinjiang Daily 190
Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps (Bingtuan)
laogai (prison labour camps) 182
laojiao ('re-education through labour') 182–183
Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR) 177, *183*
cultural degradation 180
de-extremism regulations 187
ethnic riots 184, 185–186
history of housing Han criminals and political exiles 182–183
laojiao ('re-education through labour') 184
Muslim gulags 185–189
re-education camps 188–189
Xunzi (philosopher) 178, 191

Yan'an Rectification Campaign (1943–1944) 178, 189
Yani, Ahmad 123
Yen (Vietnamese female detainee) 168–169, 170, 171
Yomiuri Hōchi 214

Zakaria, Faizah 144
Zawana 7677
Zentsuji camp 210, 212
Zenz, Adrian 187–188
Zhang, Shawn 188
Zinoman, Peter 67

THE
AUSTRALIAN
NATIONAL
UNIVERSITY